



WOC REPORT BACK FROM THE  
2018 ZAPATISTA WOMENS ENCUENTRO

WE WERE  
FULL OF  
RAGE



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Image from @zapantla

**December 29, 2017**

To the women of Mexico and the World:

To the original women of Mexico and the World:

To the women of the Indigenous Governing Council:

To the women of the National Indigenous Congress:

To the women of the national and international Sixth:

*Compañeras*, sisters:

We greet you with respect and affection as the women that we are—women who struggle, resist, and rebel against the chauvinist and patriarchal state.

We know well that the bad system not only exploits, represses, robs, and disrespects us as human beings, but that it exploits, represses, robs, and disrespects us all over again as women.

And we know that things are now worse, because now all over the world we are being murdered. And there is no cost to the murderers—the real murderer is always the system behind a man's face—because they are covered up for, protected, and even rewarded by the police, the courts, the media, the bad governments, and all those above who maintain their position on the backs of our suffering.

Yet we are not fearful, or if we are we control our fear, and we do not give in, we don't give up, and we don't sell out.

So if you are a woman in struggle who is against what is being done to us as women; if you are not scared (or you are, but you control your fear), then we invite you to gather with us, to speak to us and listen to us as the women we are.

Thus we invite all rebellious women around the world to:

### **The First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle**

To be held at the *Caracol* of Morelia, Tzotz Choj zone of Chiapas, Mexico, March 8, 9, and 10, 2018. Arrival will be March 7 and departure on March 11.





If you are a man, you are listening or reading this in vain because you aren't invited.

With regard to the Zapatista men, we are going to put them to work on all the necessary tasks so that we can play, talk, sing, dance, recite poetry, and engage in any other forms of art and culture that we want to share without embarrassment. The men will be in charge of all necessary kitchen and cleaning duties.

One can participate as an individual or as a collective. You can register at this email: [encuentromujeresqueluchan@ezln.org.mx](mailto:encuentromujeresqueluchan@ezln.org.mx) Include your name, where you are from, if you are participating as an individual or a collective, and how you want to participate or if you are just coming to party with us. Your age, color, size, religious creed, race, and way of being don't matter; it only matters that you are a woman and that you struggle against the patriarchal and chauvinist capitalist system. If you want to come with your sons who are still small, that's fine, you can bring them. The experience will serve to begin to get it into their heads that we women will no longer put up with violence, humiliation, mockery, or any other fucking around from men or from the system.

If you want to come with your sons who are still small, that's fine, you can bring them. The experience will serve to begin to get it into their heads that we women will no longer put up with violence, humiliation, mockery, or any other fucking around from men or from the system.

And if a male over 16 years of age wants to come with you, well that's up to you, but he won't get past the kitchen here. He might be able to hear some of the activities and learn something though.

In sum, men can't come unless a woman accompanies them.

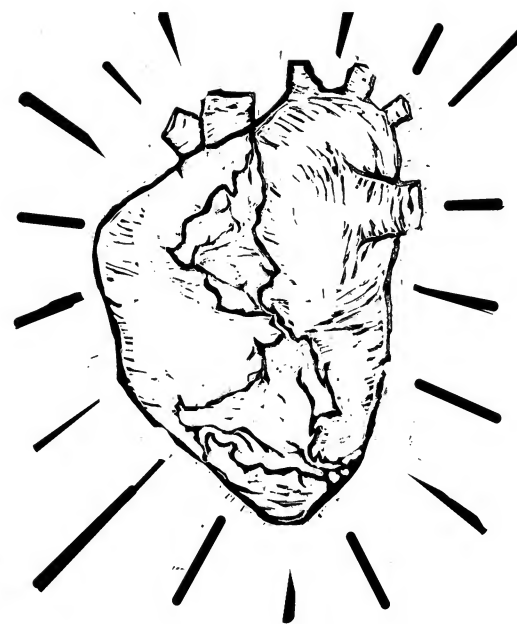
That's all for now, we await you here *compañeras* and sisters.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,

For the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee—General Command of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation and on behalf of all the girls, young women, adult women, and women elders, living and dead, councilwomen, Good Government Council women representatives, women *promotoras*, *milicianas*, *insurgentas*, and Zapatista bases of support, Comandantas Jessica, Esmeralda, Lucía, Zenaida and the little girl Defensa



# Corazones Diasporicos: Quienes Somos



Artwork: Ines Ixierda

Shortly after the encuentro was announced, a string of seemingly disjointed and unrelated conversations, many of them happening in passing and through a variety of mediums, came together to form a collective, “yeah, I’m down. That seems doable. Why the fuck not? This is actually exactly what I need right now.” In this time of heightened global fascism, we were most excited with the opportunity to return to Zapatismo, to convivir with las compañeras Zapatistas.

And so we began having more formal and frequent conversations about how exactly we were going to organize ourselves to get to the encuentro. From our respective locations in Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Humboldt we started using all the technologies available to us to bridge the 100s of miles between us in order to figure out how, as a collective, we would physically travel 1000s more. This is how Corazones Diasporicos was born, though the seed for this collective journey was planted well over a decade ago.

Corazones Diasporicos is made up of five Brown women in their 30s, all of us children of immigrants, representing various places within Mexico, Guatemala, and Bolivia. We grew up all over--Los Angeles, Stockton, Oxnard, Baker, Las Vegas, Vermont--and experienced a diverse configuration of family structures as youth, though none of us grew up with any sort of significant class privilege. As feminists of color, we stand at the crux of



various intersections with regards to our ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and gender expression.

We all hustle in very different ways too: some of us are doctors; some of us are artists; some of us are academics; some of us are landworkers; some of us are social workers; and many many other gigs we pick up along the way to make ends meet (dog walker, uber driver, burrito deliverer, etc). We use our gifts and talents to organize around a variety of issues: immigrant rights; native land sovereignty; wholistic healthcare; queer and trans farmworker struggles; environmental racism to name a few.

We met while pursuing our undergraduate degrees at Humboldt State University in Northern California, circa 2005. In the sea of whiteness that is the campus of HSU, we were all fortunate enough to find each other while participating in different people of color organizing spaces and collectives. One of these collectives was Accion Zapatista de Humboldt, a project aimed at practicing Zapatismo locally by creating spaces of encounter for communities in struggle to build connections and learn from each other, while strengthening our analysis and reclaiming our power against the forces of oblivion.

We often diverted university funding toward creating these spaces, using institutional monies to bring up organizers, cultural workers, authors, and academics representing communities in resistance all over the Americas. We had the privilege of exchanging palabra with brilliant thinkers from various sectors of society, some of whom worked directly with the Zapatista Communities in Chiapas.

For all of the magic, growth, and joy we experienced while learning about, experimenting with, and imagining ways of existing outside of degrading capitalist social relations, there was a lot of dysfunction within our group dynamic. We share with further detail the ways in which the most insidious of these dysfunctions--toxic masculinity--eventually made it so that each one of us, at various points, eventually withdrew from Zapatista-specific organizing spaces in the US all together.

Despite this, many, though not all, of the relationships formed amongst the



dozens of women who participated in these spaces of encuentro during those Humboldt Days remain intact. Sometimes those relationships have been lifelines--supporting each other, listening to each other, inspiring each other, showing up for each other, and organizing and dreaming together years after we left HSU.

We each had our reasons for wanting to attend El Primer Encuentro de Mujeres Que Luchan. As holders of US passports we have a great and undeniable amount of privilege to even consider making a trip like this. Still, this viaje did not come without a certain degree of sacrifice for each of us. Which brings us to the point of why we've even gone through the trouble of writing any of this down--travel literature (or travelogues) have been historically dominated by the narratives of class privileged hetero white males. Well we say fuck that oppressive, violent boring ass shit. Our experiences as women of color traveling, not just for leisure, but to connect, learn, build, and share with other women who struggle against capitalism and patriarchy worldwide are important and valid and worth writing down. This experience is worth keeping track of.

More importantly though, we share these stories because we believe in the power of palabra. This is why we carved out intentional imaginative space, to slowly and carefully sculpt our collective story. We met for months, listening to one another grapple with finding our voice and comprehending the significance of our experience. We worked like the caracol, lento pero avanzando. At this pace, we were able to make room for our most wild visions, our rage, our vulnerabilities, and our creativity.

We want to share a portion of this experience with the women (especially working class women of color) who for so many reasons did not have the combination of privilege, luck, and support that we had in order to be able to attend this gathering. This palabra is for all our fellow compañeras in struggle, for those who could not make it. These notes are a humble offering to you, gathered from the viewpoint of only 5 women in attendance in a historical gathering of over 5,000 mujeres. In the pages and paragraphs that follow, we will do our best to convey as much as possible of all the knowledge dropped on us by women doing liberation work all over the world.





We hope that we are able to convey here at least a portion of the insight, inspiration, and ganas to move forward with our projects of joy and liberation that we gained during the mujeres encuentro.

Con un abrazo bien fuertote para seguir luchando para un mundo justa y digna,

## **CORAZONES DIASPÓRICOS**

<https://corazonesdiasporicos.com/>  
[corazondiasporicos@gmail.com](mailto:corazondiasporicos@gmail.com)



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# Zapatista Women's Opening Address at the First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle.

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*'Comandante Erika' reading the Opening Address.  
Photo: Producciones y Milagros Archivo Femenista*

March 8, 2018. Caracol in the Tzots Choj zone.

Good morning, sisters of Mexico and the world:

Good morning, compañeras from the national and international Sixth:

Good morning, compañeras from the National Indigenous Congress:

Good morning, compañeras who are comandantas, bases of support, autonomous authorities, project coordinators, milicianas, and insurgentas:

First, we want to send a big hug to the family of the compañera Eloísa Vega Castro, from the Indigenous Governing Council support network in Baja California Sur, who died while accompanying the CIG delegation this past February 14.

We waited until today to honor the memory of Eloisa so that our embrace could be even bigger and reach even farther, all the way to the other end of Mexico.

This hug and this greeting are huge because they're from all the Zapatista women and all the Zapatista men on this day, March 8, for that woman who struggled and whom we miss today: Eloisa Vega Castro. May our condolences reach her family.



Sisters and compañeras who are visiting us:

Thank you to all of you who are here at this First International Gathering of Women in Struggle.

Thank you for making the effort to come from your many worlds to this little corner of the world where we are.

We know well that it was not easy for you to get here and that perhaps many women who struggle were not able to come to this gathering.

My name is Insurgenta Erika—that's how we refer to ourselves when we're speaking about the collective rather than the individual. I am an insurgenta captain of infantry, accompanied here by other insurgentas and milicianas of various ranks.

Our work will be to watch over this space to make sure only women are here and to not allow any men to come in. Because we know how sneaky they are.

So you'll see us walking around in order to keep watch and make sure no men come in, and if one does then we'll grab him and kick him out. Because it was stated clearly that men are not invited; they have to stay outside and find out later what happened here.

You can walk wherever you'd like. You can leave or enter whenever you like, all you need is your nametag. But men can't enter until our gathering is over.

There are also compañeras who are health promoters and some who are doctors here. So if anyone gets sick or feels ill, just tell any of us and we'll quickly let the promotoras know so that they can attend to you, and then the doctor can see you if necessary. We also have an ambulance ready to take you to a hospital if necessary.

There are also compañeras coordinating various areas, including sound technicians, those in charge of the electricity if it goes out, and those in charge of keeping things clean like the trash and the bathrooms. So that those compañeras can also participate in the gathering, we ask all of you to be mindful of the trash, hygiene, and bathrooms.

There are many of us here today, but together it's as if we are one, welcoming and hosting you the best we can given our conditions here.

Sisters and compañeras:



Our word is collective, that's why my compañeras are here with me on stage.

I'm responsible for reading this text, but we agreed upon it collectively among all of the compañeras who are organizers and coordinators of this gathering.

As Zapatista women, we are very proud to be here with you and we thank you all for giving us a space in which to share with you our words of struggle as Zapatista women.

Speaking on behalf of my compañeras, my word will be mixed up because we are of different ages and different languages and have distinct histories.

Because just as I worked as a servant in a house in the city before the uprising, I also grew up in the Zapatista rebellion of our grandmothers, mothers, and older sisters.

I saw what it was like in our communities before the struggle, a situation difficult to explain in words and even more difficult to live through, seeing how boys and girls, youth, adults, and elders died from curable diseases.

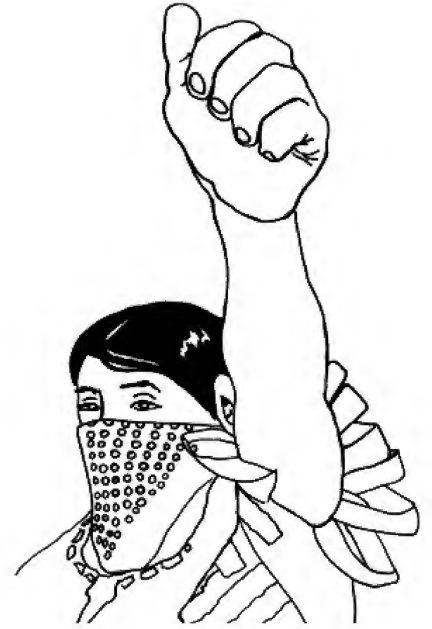
And all because of lack of medical attention, good nutrition, and education.

But we also died, and more of us, because we were women.

There were no clinics, and when there were, they were very far away. The bad government's doctors didn't take care of us because we didn't speak Spanish and because we didn't have any money.

In the house where I worked as a servant, I didn't have a salary. I didn't know how to speak Spanish and I couldn't study, I only learned how to speak a little.

Later I learned that there was an organization in struggle and I began to participate as a base of support. I would go out at night to go study and come back as the sun was coming up, because back then nobody knew about our struggle; it was all clandestine.





During that time, I participated in collective work with other Zapatista women in areas such as traditional crafts, the production of beans and corn, and raising animals.

And we did everything clandestinely—if we had meetings or political education classes, we had to say we were off to go do something else because some people didn't know anything about it, sometimes not even within our own families.

But I also was born and grew up after the beginning of the war.

I was born and grew up with the military patrols surrounding our communities and roads, listening to the soldiers say fucked up things to the women just because they were armed men and we were, and are, women.

But as a collective, we weren't afraid; rather, we decided to struggle and support one another collectively as Zapatista women.



That's how we learned that we can defend and we can lead.

And we weren't just making speeches about all this; we were actually taking up arms and fighting against the enemy. We actually commanded troops and lead battles with mostly men under our command.

And they obeyed us, because what mattered wasn't whether you were a man or a woman but the fact that you were willing to fight without giving up, selling out or giving in.

And even though we hadn't studied, we were full of rage and anger over all the fucked up things they had done to us.

Because I experienced the disdain, the humiliation, the mockery, the violence, the beatings, the deaths for being a woman, for being indigenous, for being poor, and now for being a Zapatista.

And you should know that it wasn't always men who exploited me, robbed me, humiliated me, beat me, scorned me, and murdered me.

Often it was women. And it still is.



And I also grew up in the resistance and saw how my compañeras built schools, clinics, collective work projects, and autonomous governments.

I saw public celebrations, where we all knew that we were Zapatistas and we knew that we were together.

I saw that rebellion, resistance and struggle are also a celebration, even though sometimes there's no music or dancing, just the sweat and blood of the work, the preparation, and the resistance.

I saw that where before being indigenous, being poor, and being a woman only meant death, now we were collectively building another path for life: freedom, our freedom.

I saw that whereas before we women only had our houses and fields, now we have schools, clinics, and collective work projects where we women operate equipment and guide the struggle. We make mistakes of course, but we're moving forward, with no one telling us what to do but ourselves.

And now I see that we have indeed advanced—even if only a little bit, we always manage to advance somehow.

Don't think it was easy. It was very hard, and it continues to be very hard.

Not just because the fucking capitalist system wants to destroy us: it's also because we have to fight against the system that makes men believe that we women are less than, and good for nothing.

And sometimes, it must be said, even as women we screw each other over and speak badly of each other, that is, we don't respect each other.

Because it's not just men: there are also women from the cities who look down on us because they say we don't know about women's struggle, because we haven't read books where the feminists explain how it should be. They give a lot of commentary and critique without knowing what our struggle is like.

Because it's one thing to be a woman, another to be poor, and another thing altogether to be indigenous. The indigenous women listening know this very well. And it is yet



another and more difficult thing to be a Zapatista indigenous woman.

Of course we know there's still much to do, but since we are Zapatista women, we don't give up, we don't sell out, and we don't veer off our path of struggle—that is, we don't give in.

You can see what we're capable of, because we organized this gathering among Zapatista women.

It wasn't just some idea that somebody had one day.

When the National Indigenous Congress and the Indigenous Governing Council said many months ago that as women we're going to say that we're not afraid, or that we are but we control our fear, we women began to think collectively that we too have to do something.

So in all the zones, among the large and small women's collectives, we began to discuss what to do as Zapatista women.

At CompArte last year the idea was put forth that only we Zapatista women would present and honor the Indigenous Governing Council. And that's what we did, because it was only women who received our compañeras from the Indigenous Governing Council and the spokeswoman Marichuy, who's here today.

But that wasn't all. In our collectives, we also considered and discussed the fact that we have to do more, because we see that something is happening.

What we see, sisters and compañeras, is that they're killing us.

And that they're killing us because we're women.

As if that's our crime and they're giving us the death penalty.

So we came up with the idea of having this gathering and inviting all women in struggle.



I'm going to tell you why we thought to do this:

There are women present here from many parts of the world.

There are women who have studied a lot and have degrees, who are doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, teachers, students, artists, leaders.

We ourselves haven't studied much; some of us barely speak a little Spanish.

We live in these mountains, the mountains of the Mexican southeast.

We are born here, we grow up here, we struggle here, we die here.

Well for example those trees over there, which you call "forest" and we call "brush."

Well, we know that in that forest, in that brush, there are many trees that are different.

And we know that, for example, there is pine, mahogany, cedar, and bayalté there are many kinds of trees.

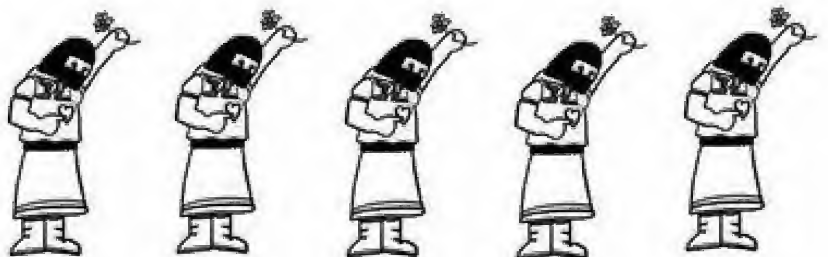
But we also know that each pine or each ocote is not the same. Each one is different.

We know this, yes, but when we see it we say that it's a forest or brush.

Well, here we are like a forest or brush.

We are all women.

But we know that we are of different colors, sizes, languages, cultures, professions, schools of thought and forms of struggle.





But we say that we are women and what's more, we are women in struggle.

So we are different but we are the same.

There are many women in struggle who are not here, but we are thinking of them even if we can't see them.

We also know that there are women who are not in struggle, who resign themselves, who falter and lose heart.

So we can say that there are women all over the world, a forest of women, and what makes them the same is that they're women.

But we Zapatista women see that something else is going on.

What also makes us the same is the violence and the death carried out against us.

That's how we see the modern condition of this fucking capitalist system. We see that it made a forest of all the women of the world with its violence and death which have the face, body and idiot brain of the patriarchy.

So we say to you that we invited you so we can speak to one another, listen to one another, see one another, and celebrate together.

We thought it should only be women so that we can speak, listen, see, and celebrate without the gaze of men, whether they're good men or bad men.

What matters is that we're women and that we're women in struggle, that is, that we don't resign ourselves to what's happening and that each of us—according to her way, her time, and her location—struggles. She rebels. She gets pissed and does something about it.

So we say to you, sisters and compañeras, that we can choose what we're going to do in this gathering.

That is, we can decide.



We can choose to compete to see who's more badass, who's the best speaker, who's more revolutionary, who's the best thinker, who's more radical, who's the best behaved, who's the most liberated, who's the prettiest, who's the hottest, who dances better, who paints better, who sings best, who's more of a woman, who wins at sports, who struggles the most.

Whatever it is, there won't be any men saying who wins and who loses. Only us women.

Or we can listen and speak with respect as women in struggle; we can give each other the gift of dance, music, film, video, painting, poetry, theater, sculpture, fun, and knowledge, and by doing so nourish the struggles that each of us has wherever we are.

So we can choose, sisters and compañeras.

Either we compete among ourselves and at the end of the gathering, when we return to our worlds, we'll realize that nobody won.

Or we can agree to struggle together, as different as we are, against the patriarchal capitalist system that is assaulting and murdering us.

Here your age doesn't matter; it doesn't matter if you're married, single, widowed or divorced, if you're from the city or the countryside, if you're affiliated with a political party, if you're lesbian or asexual or transgender or however you may call yourself, if you're educated or not, if you're feminist or not.

All are welcome and as Zapatista women, we're going to listen to you, we're going to see you and we're going to speak to you with respect.

We've organized ourselves so that in all the activities—all of them—there are some of us there who can carry your message to our compañeras in our villages and communities.

We're going to set up a special table to receive your criticisms. You can turn them in there or tell us what you see that we did or are doing badly.

We'll look at them and analyze them and, if what you say is true, we're going to figure out how to do it better.



And if it's not true, well then either way we'll think about why you told us that.

What we're not going to do is blame men or the system for errors that are our own.

Because the struggle for our freedom as Zapatista women is ours.

It's not the job of men or the system to give us our freedom.

On the contrary, the work of the patriarchal capitalist system is to keep us in submission.

If we want to be free, we have to conquer our freedom ourselves, as women.

We're going to look at you and listen to you with respect, compañeras and sisters.

And whatever we see and hear, we will know what to take from it to help our struggle as Zapatista women. What won't help, we won't take.

But we will not judge anyone.

We will not say that something is good or bad.

We did not invite you here to judge you.

Neither did we invite you to compete.

We invited you so we can encounter one another, different and the same.

We have Zapatista compañeras here from different originary languages. You will hear the collective words from women from each zone.

But we are not all here.

There are many more of us, and our rage and anger is much greater.

But our rage, that is, our struggle, is not only for us; it is for all the women who



are assaulted, murdered, beaten, insulted, disparaged, mocked, disappeared, and imprisoned.

So we say to you, sister and compañera, that we are not asking you to come and struggle for us, just like we are not going to struggle for you.

Each of us knows her way, her mode and her time.

The only thing we do ask of you is to keep struggling, don't give up, don't sell out, don't renounce being women in struggle.

To close we're asking you for something special during these days you're here with us.

Some elder sisters and compañeras, "wise women" we call them, have come here from all over Mexico and the world.

They are women who are elders and who struggle.

We ask that you respect them and give them special consideration, because we want to end up like them, to grow old and know we are still in struggle.

We want to grow older and be able to say that we have been alive for many years and that each year was a year of struggle.

But in order for that to happen, we have to be alive.

That's why this gathering is for life.

And nobody is going to give that to us, sisters and compañeras.

Not god, not man, not a political party, not a savior, not a leader, not a female leader, and not a female boss.

We have to struggle for life.





That's our lot, sisters and compañeras, and the lot of all women in struggle.

Perhaps when this gathering is over, when you return to your worlds, to your times, to your ways, someone will ask you if we reached some agreement. Because there were many different kinds of thought that came to these Zapatista lands.

Perhaps you will respond, no.

Or perhaps you will respond, yes, we did reach an agreement.

Maybe when they ask you what the agreement was, you will say, "We agreed to live, and since for us to live is to struggle, we agreed to struggle, each according to her way, her place and her time."

And maybe you'll also respond, "and at the end of the gathering we agreed to come back together again next year in Zapatista territory because they invited us for another round."

That is all our words for now, thank you for listening to us.

Long live all the women of the world!

Death to the patriarchal system!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,

The Zapatista Women.

March 8, 2018, Chiapas, Mexico, the World



NUESTRA

PALABRA

ES

COLECTIVA.

# Encountering Queerness: Caminando Preguntamos

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Outdoor Art Exhibit by Rebeldías Lésbicas Tijuana

The Zapatistas do not claim to be experts on any struggles but their own. Hosting encuentros has been a way for them (and us) to learn about the specific ways that neoliberalism is fucking us all over and to share and celebrate in the strategies being employed by communities around the world to resist those indignities. With this intention, the encuentro is a practice that brings with it the promise of limitless possibilities for coalescing and advancing anti-capitalist struggle across cultures and beyond borders.

In real time, however, the space of encounter is not always a smooth process and can bring forth clashes that are challenging, alarming, alienating, and otherwise unpleasant when individuals from completely different contexts gather together for the first time. One such incident that highlights the complexity of encuentro occurred when a couple of people from our crew witnessed a Zapatista compañera misgender a young Brown gender-nonconforming (GNC) individual from the U.S. that we were having a conversation with during the first day of the mujeres encuentro.

Now, to be perfectly transparent, while the majority of the people in our crew are queer and live/love/work in community with trans-identified, non-binary, and gender-variant people, our group is made up entirely of cis-women, so I will try my best to portray this interaction with care and apologize in advance for any shortcomings in my analysis.

So there we were, standing near the gates being guarded by the armed soldaderas of the EZLN, in the middle of getting to know some really dope folks organizing around issues of Native Sovereignty and Women of Color empowerment in the US, when a civilian Zapatista woman comes up to us and breaks up the friendly chatter by misidentifying one of our new homies as male. She was very aggressive in her misgendering, telling that person that they didn't have a right to be there and demanding that they leave immediately.

Before any of us could react to the misunderstanding and explain to the Zapatista woman that the GNC person she was targeting was not in fact male, someone from that person's travel group came up from out of nowhere and started

getting in the Zapatista woman's face (like really getting in her face), saying that the Zapatistas themselves announced in their opening statement that trans folks were welcomed at this encuentro, so why was she trippin on her friend?

And it's true. In their opening statement, the Zapatistas did say that here, it did not matter "if you're lesbian or asexual or transgender or however you may call yourself." All that mattered was that you struggle against racist capitalist patriarchy despite your fear. In that same opening statement, the Z's also declared that, "Our work will be to watch over this space to make sure only women are here and to not allow any men to come in. Because we know how sneaky they are." And if a man did manage to sneak in, they would, "grab him and kick him out. Because it was stated clearly that men are not invited."

With each seemingly being supported by the powerful words of the opening statement, on one side of this encounter we had a US-based activist who was righteously defending their friend (probably not for the first time) from the violence of misgendering and on the other side we had an indigenous Mayan Zapatista woman militantly defending her right to a woman-only space, which she **thought** was being threatened by the presence of someone she **perceived** to be male.

At one point, the person defending their friend turned to us, frustrated, and asked, "how do you say 'cis' in Spanish?"

Thankfully two of the Zapatista's medical support team walked by at that moment and completely diffused the situation, pulling their fellow Zapatista aside to see what all



the commotion was about. I wasn't able to hear what they discussed, but it took all of a few seconds for the medical team to explain to her that the GNC individual she was misgendering had every right to be there. And that was that.

While I don't minimize the harm caused by an episode that many of us may consider to be transphobic, I also want us to consider that this interaction occurred in autonomous Zapatista territory, during the Mujeres Encuentro, within the context of a living, breathing Indigenous revolution that is constantly expanding, reflecting, and creating. Given this, it's important to remember that many Zapatistas don't necessarily have experience interacting with trans realities of a Western context, nor are they familiar with some of the language used to articulate that struggle. In this instance, it felt very appropriate that it was other indigenous Mayan Zapatista women who were able to breakdown a non-binary concept of gender to a less informed Zapatista mujer, as opposed to her getting schooled by a





1st-worlder demanding a shared understanding of terms (i.e. cisgendered) that originate from within white,western, queer academic spaces--especially when that 1st worlder is a guest on that indigenous woman's reclaimed ancestral lands.

This is just one example of the complexities held within the space of encounter: an entangled lattice of learning, struggle, pain, and possibility. It also bears mentioning that oftentimes the burden of these kinds of encounters are unevenly distributed--an exemplar of fucked up power relations. Sure, the companera doing the misgendering walked away with a new understanding of a gender expression that she was not previously aware of, but her learning came at the expense of her piling on a companerx who most likely deals with all sorts of fucked up gender-policing on a daily basis.

Despite this episode, I do want to acknowledge and appreciate the ways that varying gender expressions and sexualities were generally welcomed and woven into the Encuentro. The gathering had a strong queer presence, giving space for dykes, jot@s, mariposas, marimachas, and genderfux from all over the Americas to connect, build, and share their homo magic with each other. This queer spirit was also reflected in the workshop schedule, which offered an assortment of platicas centered around *deconstruyendo géneros y explorando sexualidades disidentes*.

Foto: Producciones y Milagros Archivo Femenistas



Every morning, a group of indigenous elders from GuateMaya built an altar in the center of the futbol field and prayed with whoever needed or wanted to. For me, the most impactful ceremony took place on the last day when the elders invited all us queers, *las de otras sexualidades, otros amores, de todos "cuerpos, cuerpas, y cuerpes"* to the center of the circle to throw a piece of copal in the fire and say a special prayer for our LGBTQ+ community. And so that's what I did. I said a prayer for all the queer ancestors--the ones that I know by name and the ones I've yet to learn about--and thanked them for the gems they left behind and their continued guidance. And I said a prayer for queer fam all over the world who were taken from us by poverty, illness, depression, and all forms of cis-hetero violence and promised that I'd work harder to make sure that shit stops happening. And finally I said a prayer for us, the queer anti-authoritarians stomping all over the cisheteropatriarchy on the daily. May we exist in an abundance of joy, love, and levity while we're still here on planet earth.

XOXO,  
*curls&doom*



# The Caracol Brings Duality and Serendipity

by La Smiley

I told the other mujeres that when I learned of the Encuentro, that I felt like I *needed* to go. This emptiness that I had been feeling in the midst of heavy turmoil - could this be filled by going on this amazing trip to Chiapas with them?

I would be getting together with four of my fierce compañeras from back in the day. I've known them for almost fifteen years, and I had spent my most formative college years with them. *Organizing. Resisting. Struggling.* Much of our activism was around Zapatismo at Humboldt State University and its surrounding communities in the beautiful redwood forests of northern California.

Humboldt county, in particular the town of Arcata, was a definite culture shock for many of us people of color. I grew up in a small, mostly working class Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American, agriculture-based town in Southern California. And I definitely felt like I was in a different world.

Not only was this unfamiliar territory for myself and a lot of the friends and colleagues I became acquainted with, but it was also often unfriendly, hostile and violent territory for many of us. I am pretty light-skinned, so I know that I carried a

significant amount of privilege based off that alone, compared to some of my





comrades. Darker skinned Chicanxs, Black folks, people that identified as Native, and of other ethnic groups did not fare so well. Groups that often kept to themselves came together to fight or defend hostile acts that people in our community went through. These campaigns were often invigorating and strengthening, but at the same time they were exhausting and disheartening. This was especially true, given the fact that these white folks that did not want us there - in town, going to the University, eating at cafes or restaurants - and in general, enjoying life. That became obvious to me after only a short time living there.

The silver lining of dealing with all of this hostile, colonial racism in Northern



California, was that our struggles made us much closer in the end. We often

clung together because we *only* had each other. Humboldt County was, and is, an isolated community twelve hours north from the Los Angeles metropolitan area. And it's over five hours north from the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Area, so it made geographical sense that we all went into a form of survival mode together. However, looking back at our experiences and my memories of living there, I believe now that we were all in that space, at that time, for a reason. Well, maybe for many reasons. But I think the biggest one was to forge these unbreakable bonds that have withstood the test of aging, distance, high stress, misogyny and patriarchy in both its systemic and personal ugliness, violence, capitalism sucking our bodies and minds dry.

Over fourteen years later, I never imagined in my late teens and early twenties that I would be on my way to starting my own business and practicing in the health field. Let alone ever think of the specific field I would end up in - acupuncture and Chinese medicine.



Although I was now in a place that many would deem successful or economically more stable, my reality felt far from that. Before our trip, I felt so lost and far away because I was working at a clinic where it was standard practice to dehumanize workers. I was quickly losing my sense of purpose, direction and self-worth.

My body was split into two--a duality. It's as if one part of myself was on auto-mode and another was cautious and protective. I was on an adrenaline-infused PTSD-triggered survival mode. I was like a robot and I was going through the motions at the clinic, always on go-go-go status. *The Energizer Bunny.*

At work I've been trained, or I've trained myself, to continually look at the clock. *Tick, tock. Every minute, money wasted. Time wasted. What am I doing? Is it all worthwhile? What will I be remembered for? What ideals and values do I want to live for? Whose ideals and values am I living for? How do I sleep better at night?*

Thankfully, this delusional state of being was shattered, as my physical and mental health declined. So when the invitation to go with my compañeras came in the form of a text in January 2018 (not too long after the initial announcement), I felt a tingling sensation throughout my body. Chills and a bigger, deeper sense of calm came with it. I knew that I had to go. I knew that this is what I needed, not just for myself at the present moment,



but for my future wellbeing and for the sake of people that I would be surrounding myself with.

Being at the Encuentro, surrounded by the amazing Zapatista women who graciously hosted so many of us, felt surreal. These mujeres had inspired and motivated me tremendously so many years ago. It felt so right, and of course, much needed for me. I had veered so far



away from where I originally thought my journey would be, that I did not know if I could find my way back.

Walking up the steps, up the little hill that housed our tent, amongst hundreds of others, became commonplace for the next four days for me in the caracol of Morelia in the state of Chiapas, in Zapatista territory. The mujeres from this community, along with others from nearby communities, were gracious and wonderful hosts to us and over 4,000 other women from all around the world. We were all fortunate enough to make it to this space, the First International Mujeres Encuentro of Art, Culture and Sports in early March of 2018.

I loved waking up to the smell of wood burning. Arroz con leche and café were wonderful smells that filled the air too. This was all mixed with the smells of dew, pine and forest.

The first morning, the Zapatistas woke

us up with the sounds of traditional music. A conjunto made up of young Zapatista women played songs over the huge amps and everyone who'd arrived so far slowly arose. A mujer on stage played the accordion, another played percussion, one was on guitar and one sang. One of the Corazones heard that the lead singer was only 16(!). I got dressed, walked down the hill and was in the audience when I saw two older ladies near me. They both had



tears running down their cheeks. Seeing them got me emotional too and they looked at me and said that they had never seen or heard anything so beautiful. I hugged them and agreed.

This set the tone for the rest of the encuentro for me, and I think for the rest





of the mujeres in the collective too. We all shared that whichever workshop or space we went to, the connections we made there were remarkable. We were able to see and hear from many other women from around the world who facilitated workshops, and learn about the fierce, creative and often



necessary projects and other movements they were part of. They all gave me so much hope that “un mundo entre otros mundos”, “to lead by obeying” and many other tenets of Zapatismo is and has been a reality for a while now. One other key tendency that I loved back in my youth and I continue to find the relevance in is “preguntamos caminando” or “while walking we ask”.

Besides going to the workshops, my days were spent eating, napping and dancing. On the last night there, I vowed to get up from

my usual early night slumber and dance out on the field to the live conjunto and the other bandas. And I did. At 2 am, dancing Cumbia with a shitload of beautiful mujeres in an autonomous Zapatista Caracol in the mountains and jungle of the Mexican Southeast, is a wonderful thing. Between workshops I walked around looking at murals and checking out snippets of the various basketball, volleyball or soccer games. On top of all of this, I was lucky enough to be part of some spontaneous gatherings like circles or musical performances too.

I observed a naked lady who was having other women paint all over her body as part of a performance piece or workshop. I’m not sure. And I didn’t want to ask. There was also the group of whywomen who ran around naked for a bit on one of the days. I guess it was inevitable. If they couldn’t make it to Burning Man or Coachella, they had to get it out of their systems somewhere.



I saw many beautiful photographic and other artistic expressions and exhibits throughout the encuentro. I loved all of this. When I finally let go of trying to follow my set schedule or outline, I enjoyed my time at the Encuentro a lot more. I had to be easy on my body, hydrate, nap and rest on some of the days to recharge because all of the energy was overwhelming for me. Plus, as another Corazon so eloquently put it, the Zaps showed us everyday that they worked hard to make the Encuentro happen and run smoothly, but they always made sure to play hard too and celebrate in many ways.

As I looked at all of the colorful and wonderful murals that were painted on the buildings. I felt both nostalgia and waves of sadness, even grief, come over me. I was sad that I was no longer an active part of this world

as I once had been, and that I had left organizing around Zapatismo so many years ago. With this sadness came anger too. It was so right, so appropriate, that I was here in this space with these other women. Because the main reason that I left organizing and activism was that the patriarchal bullshit became too much for me to handle.



Not much has changed from fourteen years ago in that regard, really. Back in the day it was shit like men making all of the decisions in meetings, hosting and “facilitating” (dominating) spaces

where we brought folks from faraway places, making misogynistic, sexist and objectifying comments about women, predating the many women that came to our events and spaces with no regard to their emotions, their health or wellbeing, and being all-around general assholes that took up way too much of our time and energy with their bullshit. I left the last Accion



Zapatista meeting saying a big, literal “FUCK YOU” to my once-mentor, and former colleague.

I and other mujeres back in college naturally gravitated towards creating women-led and women-only spaces. They were the some of the most powerful and memorable spaces I recall ever being part of. I had never really experienced this feeling and camaraderie since then, not until I was there in Chiapas at the Encuentro with thousands of women, and my college compañeras, from around the world.

How much had we all traveled, had we all saved, sacrificed, collected, sold, dreamt, and gathered - all of of our strength, resources, time, money and energy to be here together? How fucking awe-striking and amazing was this. Yet, it was also calming and reassuring that thousands of inspirational, humble Indigenous Zapatista women - the same women who had inspired our younger selves so many years ago - had brought us together once again. To merely celebrate and share our amazingness with one another.

So this history, this pain and guilt and shame from leaving this world and my organizing community, plus the projects I had worked so hard on, did not feel overwhelming as it had before, once I was in this space. I finally felt like everything would be alright. Especially since talking with my compañeras about different work and other sexual harassment situations, I felt much stronger - and not alone anymore. I may have left Zapatismo in the physical realm for a while, but I knew now that it never left me and always had a home in my heart. I knew that I had found my way again.





United States of Amerikkka/  
El Norte...







## ENCONTRARNOS COMO MUJERES

I had to trust myself, and when I could not, I would trust in my compañeras and that is what carried me through the trip. Being with the amazing, strong, inspiring women of Corazones Diasporicós helped me realize just how quickly I could let go and not have the fear, pain and anxiety I carry with me on a daily basis. Traveling with each other felt as if no time had passed. I felt the same intense love and trust I did 13 years ago when we all initially met. This is the closest I have truly felt sisterhood, the love and the power of being a woman something that I often heard my hippy dippy white liberal friends go on and on about, euphorically reminiscing about the women's circles they have forever invited me to... if this is what they feel, then I get it, but fuck me if I will ever participate in that shit after experiencing it with these chingona women of color.

As a young college student I would cringe at the words feminism, feminist, and the very popular “smash the patriarchy” slogan. I could not see past the white feminist agenda that ultimately served itself and left behind women like me feeling used and out of place. Yes, smash the patriarchy, until I radicalize myself into a good degree, tenure at college, or direct that radical non-profit, then I can ride the patriarchies dick and reminisce about the good old radical days. Remember smash the patriarchy?!

Deep down, I did not want this for myself, so I retreated to the isolation and anger of being a woman of color adrift in an ocean of white supremacist-heteropatriarchy wrapped up in nicely knit pussy hats. In certain spaces, and in my yearning for belonging and healing, I would participate in community spaces and organizing efforts that for a second felt good. Felt familiar.

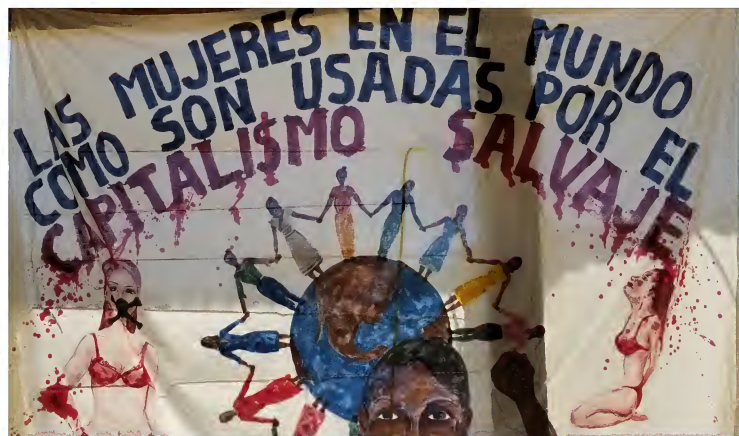
As we landed into Mexico I was overwhelmed and wanted to cry. I cry now as I write and remember. I felt like I could blend in and no one would ogle me. I was just another person in an ocean of other people. A respite specific to me as a woman of color that lives in an 80% white rural county. Yes, I noticed the blond gentrifiers in CDMX and fully realize the dynamics of racial privilege and gentrification going on CDMX (I am woke!) pero dejame vivir en mi delirio por unos minutos.

In Chiapas and on the road to el Caracol de Morelia, I felt an excitement and a swelling of joy, estando en territorio rebelde, autónomo y zapatista. To be greeted with such love and



attention by the compañeras, we eagerly set up our camps, en sueño totalmente. Escuchar la bienvenida, estar en un océano de mujeres que luchan. The chants: “abajo el patriarcado” y “abajo el capitalismo”. That is what was missing, in that ocean of pink pussy hats we saw march nationally, like a switch - fuck capitalism. You can't have one without the other if your movement is truly about liberation.

To taste freedom in what felt like its most purest form, to see each other and our different worlds. How I wanted to keep that beautiful feeling the safety of being in autonomy with otras compañeras. We are humans of the capitalist kind and the isms reared their ugly heads and as our insurgent compa Erika said during the introductory speech at the encuentro, “It was not always men that exploited me, robbed me, humiliated me, beat me, despise me, murdered me. But also, many times it was women that did that to me. And they still do this.”



But even at the encuentro, surrounded by women who I assumed felt an affinity for zapatismo and excitedly chanted for the end of the patriarchy and capitalism alongside me, my compas and I experienced those “microaggressions” that inform the larger forms of violence against the poor women, the indigenous women, the women of color, the gay and trans women. Within the first couple of hours of being in territorio zapatista, while setting up our tent, a blonde woman and her little boy (both presented as white) struggled to make their tent. The same woman that had the zapatista compas carry her stuff and even her 7 year old able bodied son up a hill to settle them in their sleeping spot. I told myself she was a mother nonetheless and went over to help. My other compas came over to help shortly after. In talking with the woman she described how she was from the US and just loved Mexico, she told me she lives in Morelia and that she lives part of the year in Alaska. My insides wretched and I asked myself the typical question I ask myself when interacting with privileged people: is she aware of her privilege? I politely moved on and didn't press further.

In the way life works, I had an answer to these questions at the end of the trip as I walked the markets in San Cristobal with one of my compas. I ran into the woman and the child from the encuentro. I debated whether I should say hi or not to her as she did not notice



me. I overhear her haggling with a vendor on prices and then see her child spit on two little Chiapaneco boys. The image of this blonde child with a mohawk spitting on two brown children enraged me. The woman simply said to him, “don’t do that.” I continued to walk and shook my head. Again, I stepped away without intervening or questioning her.

Along with my compañeras, we could write pages about all of these small but constant instances of encountering white women and their privilege. The countless number of times white-presenting women cut me in line, argued with the compañeras selling food about the prices (mind you it was already extremely low cost) and demanded made to order food. I share the story of that woman because it came full circle to me. I don't want to ever leave someone unchecked or unquestioned. I want people to sit in discomfort and hopefully reflect on their privilege. Even if it changes nothing for them, I won't be swallowing and internalizing that anger, hurt, and frustration.

Getting back to reflecting on the encuentro and the collective words of our Zapatista sisters, in the words shared by our insurgente compañera Erika: “Acordamos luchar juntas.” In leaving the encuentro, is this where we start? An agreement to struggle together? Can we look past those differences that often in themselves are oppressive to each other? I recall one clear, shared goal we left with was that we fight against the capitalist patriarchy.



How do I bring this back to my community? How can I share this feeling? How can we create a true temporary autonomous space where we can share, open, and heal without inhibitions (I'm not saying run around topless. I will leave that to the white ladies at the encuentro - what the zapatista compañeras call “las cosas extrañas”). How do I invite other women to partake in this with me, within the context of the capitalist, hetero, patriarchal ocean of pink pussy hats? I end this writing with questions in a very zapatista way, we need to walk forward and continue to ask ourselves questions, I can answer them for myself but I want everyone to contribute and expand our little worlds. To create a world where many worlds fit.



# HASTA EL HORIZONTE

X LA CHIONA

It was clear to me how much we all needed to be with each other. It's a rare and beautiful experience to travel with compañeras. Especially compañeras who share your same political values and dreamy visions for the future. We were fortunate enough to have the resources to travel together in Mexico and to attend an encuentro in autonomous indigenous communities.

Our first few days in Mexico was full of storytelling. We spent time catching up, cracking up and reminiscing our past. The stories eventually culminated to retelling our encounters with misogyny. Story after story of being told to be silent, of being invisible, of being forgotten, of being humiliated, and so familiar feelings. We other's struggles, but in had each other. We with yoga, care, loads of "fuck them assholes."

Being in Mexico catching up not just on every fight we each macho, misogynist common element, as well as shock at the new levels of disgust we had experienced. After exhausting our collective pain, our testimonios gave us strength to move on. Our rage, aflamed, made us feel even more committed and excited to walk along our Zapatista compañeras who urged us to continue to fight.

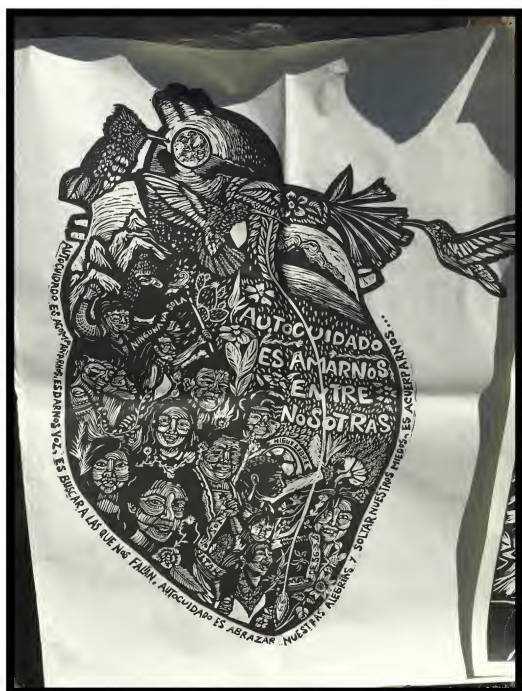


being displaced, of on. These were all too were reliving each these moments we addressed our pain jokes, and shit-ton of

City felt like we were our lives, but also on endured with a world. Tears were a

# EL ENCUENTRO DE MUJERES QUE LUCHAN

Here we realized the importance of sharing the story of struggles within struggles. Here we contended with our desires to create projects that centered beautiful women, queer, and trans people, while having to negotiate our time to deal with the everyday bs of men. Las compañeras zapatistas were beyond generous. It was clear they put careful thought to each gesture: food, housing, water, waste, healing, dancing, art, play, safety, transportation and even a space of suggestions for improvement. We were treated with dignity and respect. We were guaranteed safety. We were offered love, care and joy. A place and moment in this universe to be freely ourselves.



During the opening speech the zapatista women said they welcomed lesbians, trans women, and those “de otras amores”--suggesting loves without categories. At one point they also spoke of “cuerpos feminizados” . I think this was referring to both societal pressures of an ideal western image of womanhood, and the *naturalized* violence that is associated with feminized bodies, e.g. femicides, trans misogyny. Discussion of the spectrum of violence inflicted on feminized bodies was treated with great attention and nuance. It felt affirming to be fully understood.

Every night there were concerts. One night featured a hip-hop group and the zapatista women partied hard. The mornings and evenings smelled of burning leña. It was great to see all the children and elders present. I noticed a lot of physical affection





amongst the zapatista compañeras. It was sweet to see such overt care and love in a political movement space. Unfortunately, this is a rare scene within our leftist spaces.

## TRASTES

One day I saw a non-zapatista woman ask the zapatista compas if she could help them with washing the dishes. The compas were overwhelmed with filling orders and serving food. They sighed with relief, but not without a bit of hesitation, knowing one of their guests would be working. After a couple of hours another woman had taken up a dishwashing shift. The compas were grateful for the extra help.



Washing dishes has been a constant topic of conversation in the workshops. Not because women are “naturally” drawn to doing them or talking about housework, but it was a collective frustration of how women are expected to do them. We discussed how the kitchen, unfortunately or not, is a technology. One of the workshops prompted us to think about technology as it relates to our bodies: *What is my earliest memory of technology? Who used it at home? What technology do women who struggle use? Tecnologia convive con el cuerpo--it is an extension of the body.*

## MANY EMBRACES

Zapatista women who approached us weren't sure if anybody would come. They





didn't expect such a response from the women of the world. They told us how they were happy to be there. Many zapatista women traveled very far to be at the encuentro (+12 hours). About 2,000 zapatista women attended.

At three different points during the encuentro, Zapatista compañeras approached me and asked about my struggles and where I was from. We talked about migrants, how the partidistas migrate and how the zapatistas have no need to travel. They asked about my struggle and the bad government. I told them about my community and campesinos en el norte. We talked about how they prepared to receive more than four thousand women for the encuentro, I asked, "Como lo lograron?" They simply responded with, "We organized". I said that must have been difficult since they have to travel so much and there are so many indigenous languages in Chiapas. They said, "Yes, we know a little of all the languages." Of course, they've been at this for more than 40-fucking-years!

It was magical to hear directly from the compañeras about how they were experiencing the encuentro. They shared that they were walking around and talking with mujeres directly to find out about their struggles. We also talked about the men and how they happily left them behind to clean, cook, and take care of the children. There were plenty of giggles and smiles when we imagined the men doing all the housework. We all laughed and joked about how the men have to wake up extra early to make the tortillas. Ultimately, we kept repeating how happy we were to share space together. At the end of the conversation we all kissed on the cheeks

and embraced each other. x



# MOVIMIENTO ENTRE MOVIMIENTOS

As with the cultural, political, and artistic offerings curated by the Zapatista women for this encuentro, the compañeras did a spectacular job of providing us the time and space to explore the role that sports play in building and maintaining autonomous revolutionary communities. There was ample opportunity throughout the day to either watch or participate in a friendly, yet fiercely competitive, game of fútbol, volleyball, or basketball.



Fotos: Producciones y Milagros Archivo Femenistas



And the space given for physical play wasn't just limited to mainstream sports either. When not being used for a match, different corners of the fútbol field were used to host yoga, tai chi, capoeira, and dance lessons. The workshop schedule was jam-packed with sessions offering a politicized space for us to explore our bodies through culturally-rooted practices based in physical movement. In this, las muxeres Zapatistas were giving us the opportunity to explore how movement functions within movements, comfortably outside of the male gaze.

Back home, my efforts were gradually shifting more and more towards building community via collective physicality. This looked like leading yoga classes in Spanish and organizing qpoc-led movement and meditation sessions for the local LGBT+ community. It looked like finally taking the time to learn how to fight and sharing that knowledge,



along with a “fuck you! no me toques” attitude, with the young girls in my neighborhood. It also looked like learning about our local ecology and reconnecting with our madre tierra through the sweat of building and maintaining native, edible, drought-tolerant, and medicinal gardens. Sometimes I wonder why it took me so long to get in touch with this part of myself--my physical self and all its strength and power. I suppose that part of it had to do with growing up in a feminized body under a capitalist patriarchy, where side-effects on the mind-body-spirit relationship are abundant.

Given this headspace, I was motivated to attend as many movement/body focused workshops as possible and jotted down the following titles in my notebook: Meditación en movimiento; Jiu-jitsu Mexicana para la autodefensa; Descolonizando las caderas; Vivencia de ginecología autónoma; Juegos cooperativos; Reiki, automasaje, y flujos del chi; Elaboracion de spray de autodefensa; Danza Africana; Higiene de salud espinal. And these were only some of the offerings. For various reasons, I didn’t get a chance to attend all of the sessions I was interested in, but I’m grateful that I had the opportunity to share in the ones I did.

The first workshop I attended was called “Dinámicas grupales” and it was facilitated by two members of the Colombian-based Tropa de Falopio, who use art, dance, theatre, poetry, and sculpture to call into movement those who wish to “reclaim their autonomy and ancestral power.” Because it was being held in an enclosed patio, the Zapatista compañeras were given priority entrance before the space reached capacity, which was true of all of the sessions with limited capacity. The facilitators led us in the following games: Escuela de Peces (kinda like follow the leader), Zim Zam Zoom (a frenetic exercise in the energetic transfer of sound and movement ), Terremoto (think musical chairs but more chaotic and without the chairs). These games forced us all to get real silly with each other and I could tell that everyone in attendance was having a blast.

As I exited the patio, a young Brown woman from New York asked me about the workshop that had just taken place. When I told her, she just scoffed and said, “that sounds like some non-profit shit.” I held my tongue and didn’t tell her about how the facilitators weren’t non-profit professionals, but diy punk rock queers

organizing with very little material resources in violent and impoverished neighborhoods in South America (conditions that Amerikkkanas like us couldn't even begin to imagine) or how the young Zapatista women in attendance were furiously taking down notes during the workshop so that they could go back and share these games with their own communities in their respective Caracoles. I didn't tell her about all the elder Zapatista women in the session who were letting loose, wiggling their limbs, y cagandose de la risa or that anybody who knows anything about popular education and revolutionary pedagogy knows that these types of activities are essential to grassroots movement building. My mood was pretty elevated as a result of that workshop and I didn't want to kill my high by getting into it with some some arrogant-ass 1st worlder about how shitty it is to project their own experiences onto a context that their not even trying to comprehend. Having been raised by a group of Central American women who are kind, loyal, hardworking, and wise, but who also never thought twice about getting into fist-fights if the occasion called for it, it's hard for me to engage with arrogant and purposefully ignorant people without REALLY putting them in their place. So I just smiled at her and walked away. It was the most compassionate thing I could do at that moment...I'm working on it.

Another interesting workshop that I attended was called "Nuestro cuerpo, nuestro territorio" and it was facilitated by a Danza Azteca elder who was repping the groups Danza terapéutico and Mural colectivo. Growing up in Los Angeles' southeast suburban barrios, I was definitely exposed to the practice of Danza Azteca, but it is not something that I ever found appealing or even welcoming. Still, I opened my heart to the experience as the maestra led us through a guided movement meditation that took us from embodying our most primordial state, to our animal selves, to our reproductive selves. The session culminated with her encouraging each of us into a simulated birthing experience. My US-based, qipoc-informed, feminist politics wouldn't let my mind get over the cis-hetero-ness of it all. I was feeling a bit uneasy at this point, so I just positioned myself into a comfortable squat and tried not to make eye contact with anyone as many of the women around me wholeheartedly embraced this exercise - tears streaming down their cheeks, snot pouring out their nose. Even though it wasn't my cup of tea, I







appreciate the ways that other compañeras were deeply moved by the experience.

I am super glad that I attended that danza workshop though, because while I was waiting in line to get in, I totally metiche'd my way into the conversation of a group of women from Mexico City standing right in front of me (mostly I was trying to avoid engaging too deeply with the white woman from Pasadena standing behind me who was waaaay too excited about meeting me and the fact that I was "able to make it all this way"

from my working class ghetto). Turns out that one of the Mexicanas standing in front of me was actually teaching a kickboxing workshop the following day. Fuuuuuuuck yeah!!! She told me about how she'd been training since she was a little kid and how she taught self defense classes at a lesbofemenista vegan cafe in the city called La Gozadera for "cuerpos en resistencia" (because, as she put it, the term queer "son políticas del norte"). The following day at the workshop I paired up with one of the lesbos that trains in Mexico City to practice basic striking techniques and she told me that they train 3 hours a day, several times a week. Dang! Talk about dedication (and also of course the privilege of being physically healthy and able-bodied). It was so refreshing to talk to other anti-authoritarian gay women about creating space for exploited genders and sexualities to learn how to fight. My conversation with the kickboxing coach continued months after the encuentro via email, as she generously shared from her own knowledge base about how to enhance my facilitation techniques for my efforts back home. All in all, it was totally worth doing an awkward birth squat for this exchange.

Finally, on the morning of the last day of the encuentro, I woke up with the sun and took a quick, cold shower so as not to feel too grimy at the "Descolonizando las caderas" workshop, led by a member of the anti-racist, Afro-diasporic activist group called Colectivo AfroKute. This workshop took place on a corner of the soccer field and because there were a million things going on around us it was



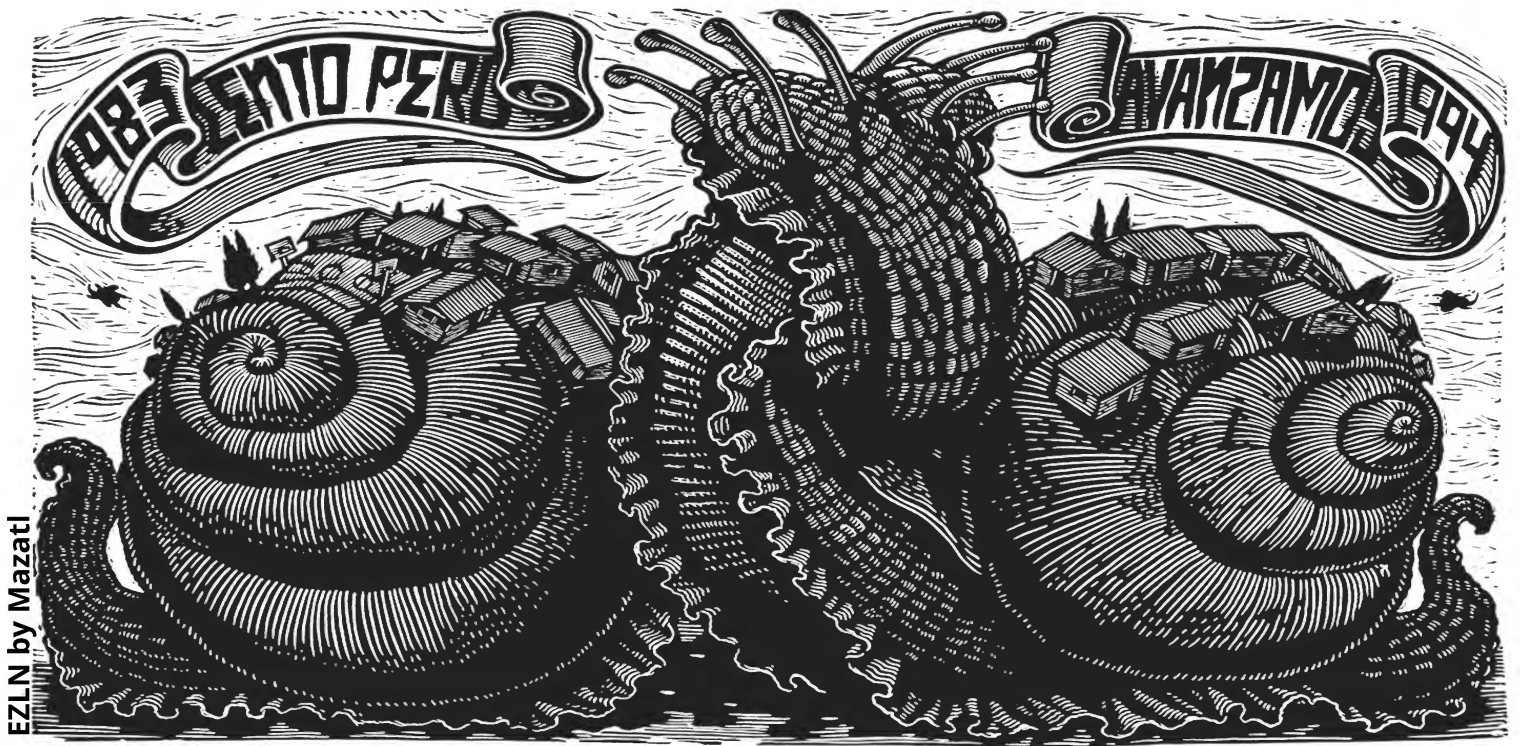
really hard to hear most of what the facilitator shared. What I did get was that she was approaching the topic of perreo from an academic feminist perspective informed by her lived cultural experience as a fat gay Black woman from Latinoamerica. She connected the hip and booty movement used to dance reggaeton to the rhythms and motions of her own African ancestry and talked about the women in the music videos as subject of her own bodily and spiritual pleasure, as opposed to a sexual object of the male gaze. Sus caderas manifestando alegría, not for him, but for her to feel her own damn fierceness. And then, of course, we danced. And I guess some of the women there were feeling pretty darn free (entitled?) cause after just one song some of them started shedding clothes and dancing naked...and some of the Zapatista girls giggled to each other about this, and I giggled at them giggling about it, as I decided to focus on decolonizing my own hips for a few more songs.

A few weeks ago, a good friend from San Antonio, Tejas came to visit me in LA, fresh off completing a super white and culturally alienating MFA dance program at a prestigious university in the Midwest. I took her to one of my favorite hiking spots in Palos Verdes and after making our way up and down the coastal cliff, I suggested cooling down with some stretches at the perfectly manicured lawn separating the beachside "Trump National Golf Course" to the trails leading into the public beach. She wasn't into it. Too many white people. Too many WEALTHY white people. And I get it. Inside each of us there was a fear of simply existing in such close proximity to a rich white boy space. This fear included getting harassed by the whites who didn't think we had a right to be there or getting the cops called on us for freely moving our queer Brown female bodies in public space. The following day, I was able to tag along with my genius dancer friend to the Indigenous Choreographers conference she was in town for and I got to dance freely again. I got to participate in a workshop led by a revolutionary Mayan Dance troupe from Guatemala called Grupo Sot'zil and in that space I was hit by that ganas de vivir that you can only get from dancing freely with other Black and Brown bodies in a decolonial ancestral context. It reminded me of why it's so important to incorporate movement into our movements. But of course, the Zapatista women been knowing this.

**XOXO,**  
*curls&doom*







## THE DIFFERENT SCALES OF TRASH & A POLITICS OF CARE

One of the most amazing feats of the encuentro was how the Zapatista compañeras organized the logistics of hosting 5,000 - 7,000 women in one community. One logistical element the Zapatistas had to figure out was what to do with all the waste that the women would produce. While we do

not know ultimately how they handled the trash after we left, we can only discuss what we observed during the encuentro.

We were prompted to share our thoughts on this important element of the encuentro after hearing other visitors discuss the “trash issue” as they

reported back their experiences at the encuentro.

During the opening speech, the compas stated that they had people “in charge of keeping things clean like the trash and the bathroom.” More importantly, they added a follow up request for all of the guests “to be mindful of the trash, hygiene, and bathrooms,” in order for all the companeras to fully participate in the encuentro. Their statements reminded us that the weight of taking of care of things (i.e. waste) is a shared

responsibility; despite the ever present capitalist-patriarchal-racist logic that determines only the darkest, poorest, and often feminized bodies must deal with our waste.

The Zapatista compañeras, in-line with decades of organizing major events and hosting over tens of thousands of people, worked nothing but magic to deal with everyone's shit. Literally. The compas continued to show us that they can carefully throw a party and honor the earth. For instance, the encuentro invitation asked outsiders to bring their own dishware to reuse throughout our time there. A few other examples come to mind: the \*low-running\* showers and \*zero-flush\* toilets; organic and inorganic waste bags; and 15-feet long passive compost sites. Of course it's absurd for outsiders to compare our capitalist western context to that of a uniquely autonomist indigenous one. It's important to recognize the different scales at which we encounter our waste.

How does it impact our everyday life? At what level of privilege can we forget about the waste we produce? To whom is waste political? Who gets to be an environmentalist and who gets stuck just dealing with the realities of poverty? How can we build a shared responsibility over waste? What does it mean to practice a politics of care with the earth?

Finally, as outsiders we must also consider the ways in which indigenous people are confronted by consumption and waste on multiple scales. As we were driving back to the city through the windy road, my compañeras and I witnessed what this looked like on a larger scale, specifically in the form of extractivism. We saw many parts of the forest missing. The driver, who worked closely with a local human rights organization, pulled over several times to take pictures of the tree-less patches. The material manifestation of greed. The pictures, he told us could help in local anti-deforestation campaigns. X











# ZAPATISTA WOMEN'S REVOLUTIONARY LAWS

*As published by the EZLN in El Despertador Mexicano, issued on January 1 1994 in  
conjunction with the uprising.*

In the just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women into the revolutionary struggle, regardless of their race, creed, colour or political affiliation, requiring only that they share the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. In addition, taking into account the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution supports their just demands for equality and justice in the following Women's Revolutionary Law.

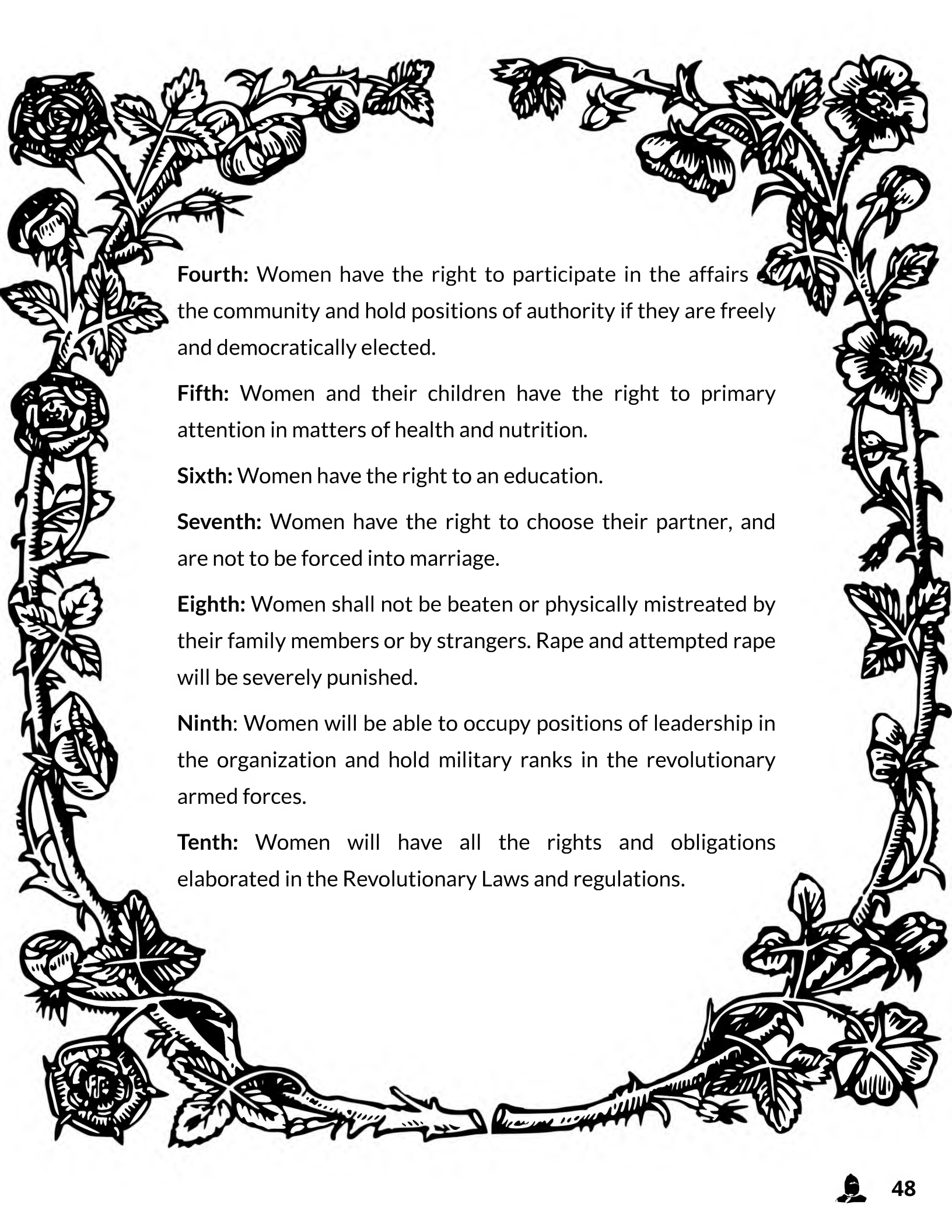
**First:** Women, regardless of their race, creed, colour or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in a way determined by their desire and capacity.

**Second:** Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

**Third:** Women have the right to decide the number of children they will have and care for.







**Fourth:** Women have the right to participate in the affairs of the community and hold positions of authority if they are freely and democratically elected.

**Fifth:** Women and their children have the right to primary attention in matters of health and nutrition.

**Sixth:** Women have the right to an education.

**Seventh:** Women have the right to choose their partner, and are not to be forced into marriage.

**Eighth:** Women shall not be beaten or physically mistreated by their family members or by strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

**Ninth:** Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

**Tenth:** Women will have all the rights and obligations elaborated in the Revolutionary Laws and regulations.

VIVIR

ES

LUCHAR

# COMO PUEDE SER

*an imploration to the universe, a question of logistics, a remark of disbelief)*

How could it be?

I felt wild for even imagining I could ever possibly.

I'm totally broke, freshly traumatized, and physically disabled. How could I possibly even consider it?

But somehow the Zapatista call for all rebellious women penetrated the depression I had been struggling with for so long, it transcended the anxiety of my PTSD, it dissolved the boundaries of possibility and every piece I dreamed started to come together.

I sent a text to my compañera, by the end of the week there were flurries of emails and conference calls set up. I collected airline miles, got a new credit card, and borrowed a backpack.

Our collective of Muxeres in diaspora reemerged, calling on our our past women of color centered zapatista organizing with a new mission; to reunite on autonomously held rebel territory.

Six weeks later we're in San Cristobal. Even with local connections, we really didn't even fully know where to go or how to get there when we arrived. Five muxeres fly thousands of miles on faith. And what do you know? 10 minutes into our chilaquiles a comapañera approaches us,

"Are you going to the encuentro? We have 7 seats in our van."

We hit up all the local markets in San Cris, gathering our supplies, hauling bags of all the food and water we would need for the trip



across town. As we wound up our last errand, we piled into a taxi only to be stalled a couple blocks away in solid gridlock. We were all five in the back of that little sedan sweating it out when through the city traffic a sound came over the night; the growing voices of women.

We looked at each other and piled out again, rounding the corner straight into the middle of a march. It was all the women gathering in San Cristobal for the encuentro from all over the country and world, full of jubilation and rage and laughter and music, filling the street for as far as we could see, jumping and dancing and chanting:

Berta no se Murio. Berta no se murio.

Berta se hizo millones, se hizo millones:

Berta Soy yo.



We joined in, crying like babies and laughing and dancing, following the rebellious parade down to narrow stone streets to the plaza, listening to feminist activists and organizers share their word into the night. In just a few hours we would be headed to Caracol Morelia.

We set out before dawn and drove for hours through the winding mountain roads of Chiapas. We were the very first vehicle to arrive on the very first day. At the



outskirts of the community, we met a group of men from the Zapatista army and left our van at the boundary to hike the last stretch in with the promise our driver would return in 5 days. Across the hill we could already see a huge banner across the gated entry that read: Women of the World Welcome! No Men allowed!



There were teams of Zapatista filming on the hillsides and the army guarding the perimeter. We were the first group registered and passed through the gates guarded by the women of the zapatista army. We set up at the top of the hill and hung our banner: *Corazones Diaspóricos: Muxeres en Lucha*. We made it.

It was amazing to see all of the women from all over the world stream in over the next few days. There were lines at the entrance hundreds of people long straight through till the next morning with Indigenous women and queer women and city women in little heels and non binary women and punks and mixed kids and white people and viejas and tweens and fat toddling babies in skimasks. The whole landscape blossomed with tents and blankets and signs. There were thousands of zapatista women and girls from many different territories running every component, preparing food, organizing water, maintenance, repairs, lights, sound, video, todo!

There were large structures built to host the gathering, all covered in amazing





murals and colors, reading things like: “Education is liberation” “The people lead, the government follows” “We don’t need permission to be free. ”



*Crowd outside an at capacity workshop i*

My spirit vibrated with the beauty of the gathering, but everyday I struggled with how the logistics of travel impacted my disabled body. The heavy backpacks, the long treks through bus stations and airports, not nearly enough sleep, irregular meals, camping in rural Mexico. It was a lot. The encuentro itself was physically hard to navigate, spread out over several acres. Rocky uneven pathways through thousands of tents, long bathroom lines, workshops crowded beyond capacity, sleeping on the ground. I pushed myself as hard as I could fueled by this wild dream but I’m not going to lie, physically it was rough.

Traveling with the collective helped. Compas shared the physical demands to prepare us, some were familiar with the area and led the way, some ventured ahead to scope out situations, some stayed behind to rest and take care of their bodies. I ended those long days with nerve pain meds, muscle relaxers, and my legs up the wall for the swelling. Aching, but grateful.

On the first day, walking through the crowd with my cane I heard someone call, “Hey what about her? Compañera! Come over, the disabled ones are here!” Right there, I was recruited into a talking circle with disability justice activists from Mexico City. The woman in the wheelchair leading it cackled at me as I sat down “We made it! Haha! Can

you believe it? There's one more activist in a wheelchair from the city, but she is even smaller than me. If she actually makes it it will be a miracle! I will definitely pee if I see her rolling up here! I hope she comes."

Her name was Karina Arriaga and she lead a disability justice workshop the next day, "Vivir, Sonar, resistir y organizarse desde y por la diversidad y la discapacidad." Because there were no accessible paths it took four people to carry her up the hill in her chair to where her workshop was. Together they all read the words of their disabled comrades from back home that couldn't make the trek.

Later Karina asked the group, "How many people here know someone with a disability?" Everyone raised their hand. "Yeah? Why aren't those people here?" she demanded. "Why didn't you invite them? Why didn't you say you would help them make it? They



*The Disability Justice workshop*

should be here! Disabled people deserve to be here."

From what I saw, there were very few visibly disabled people at the encuentro. I expected this

but I was still acutely aware of my limp, my leg, my slowness, my pain, my cane. Of the 5,000+ people I saw 4 or 5 walking with canes, 1 with a brace, and 3 using wheelchairs. One chair user told me that when she arrived she spoke with the zapatistas and a special access bathroom was created to accommodate her needs. The whole crew was



able to camp under the main stage, right next to the bathrooms and one of the kitchens. In the end, Karina's friend made it on the last day! We couldn't believe it. We all danced together in our own ways during the decolonizing your hips workshop, blasting afro-perreo on the stage above us.



*Encuentro Centro*

This was just one of the many moments I thought my heart my eplode.

Over the four days of the convergence our collective reflected on our lives, the struggles we navigate and how studying zapatismo together 15 years earlier has influenced and empowered us. I met people from all over the world, I went to art shows that were carried across continents in backpacks and hung from clotheslines. I attended talks about autonomous land projects and saw grandmas passing around diagrams of the clit in feminist sexuality workshops. I ate elote everyday and heard an 11 year old girl talk about neoliberalism and lead thousands of people in anti-capitalist chants.

20 years after the zapatista uprising began, this space highlighted the possibility of a rebellion centering the voices of women. The scope was staggering. The Zapatistas communities are spread out over 55 municipalities and are estimated to include over 300,000 people. They have their own school, medical centers, currency. They keep their own time. Their children are talking about domestic violence in the historical past tense.

This is the view from below. The things they tell us are not possible are happening right now.

Late one the night all the festivities and sounds all at once cut short across the fields and stages and all the lights all around us went out. After a pause in the darkness of the mountains, deep in Chiapas, one by one, hundreds of zapatista women lit candles and a great wave of flickering lights reached out all across the expanse of night. And from the darkness an insurgent voice spoke (excerpt):

“That small light is for you.

Take it, sister, *compañera*....

When you feel that the struggle is very hard; when life itself is very hard.

Take it and turn it into rage, courage, and determination.

Take it and join it with other lights

Then, perhaps,

we can meet again

to set fire to the system.”

A radical indigenous proposal, A candle spell, a light of dignity to carry in our spirits and pass on now to you.





THEN PERHAPS WE  
CAN MEET AGAIN AND  
SET FIRE TO  
THE SYSTEM.

AND PERHAPS YOU WILL  
BE BESIDE US

ENSURING NO ONE  
PUTS THAT FIRE  
OUT UNTILL IT IS  
ONLY ASHES.



# **WHYPIPO**

The first white woman I saw come into the encuentro was entering the gate, holding her kids' hand while 4 Zapatista compañeras hauled her luggage and bags up the hill for her and started setting up her tent.

There were the white women that interrupted an Indigenous speaker during their presentation on environmental defense and dominated the space with their own experiences and stories.

There were the white women that just straight up cut in the bathroom line because they really had to go. More than once.

There were the white women who would leave the precious Zapatista water running out onto the ground from the catchment tanks while they brushed their teeth.

There were the white women sitting and waiting to be served while everyone else stood in line and the Compañeras who had been staffing the kitchens for days literally were running to bring them their super specialized food orders and get back to the kitchen.

There were the white women in front of us haggling with a very tired young person over 2 pesos change (2!) who refused to take the 20 pesos we offered them to drop it so the line could keep moving. "I don't want your money, I want my change."

There was a white woman who reached into the pot a Zapatista totally unknown to her was cooking in and ate from it without asking.

And of course, the white dreadlocks and deep bindi-Guatemalan Huipil-southwest squashblossom jewelry- appropriated pan-ethnic fashions white women were there too.

Over and over, though vastly outnumbered, many of the white people in attendance displayed the privileged vulgarities and assumed entitlements of their Whiteness, taking up huge amounts of space. It was especially difficult to see the radical politic of generosity and hosting offered by the Zapatista women be thoughtlessly consumed and be taken advantage of.



We offer these observations from the experience of US born Women of Color, recognizing we are bringing our lived experience in colonized American.

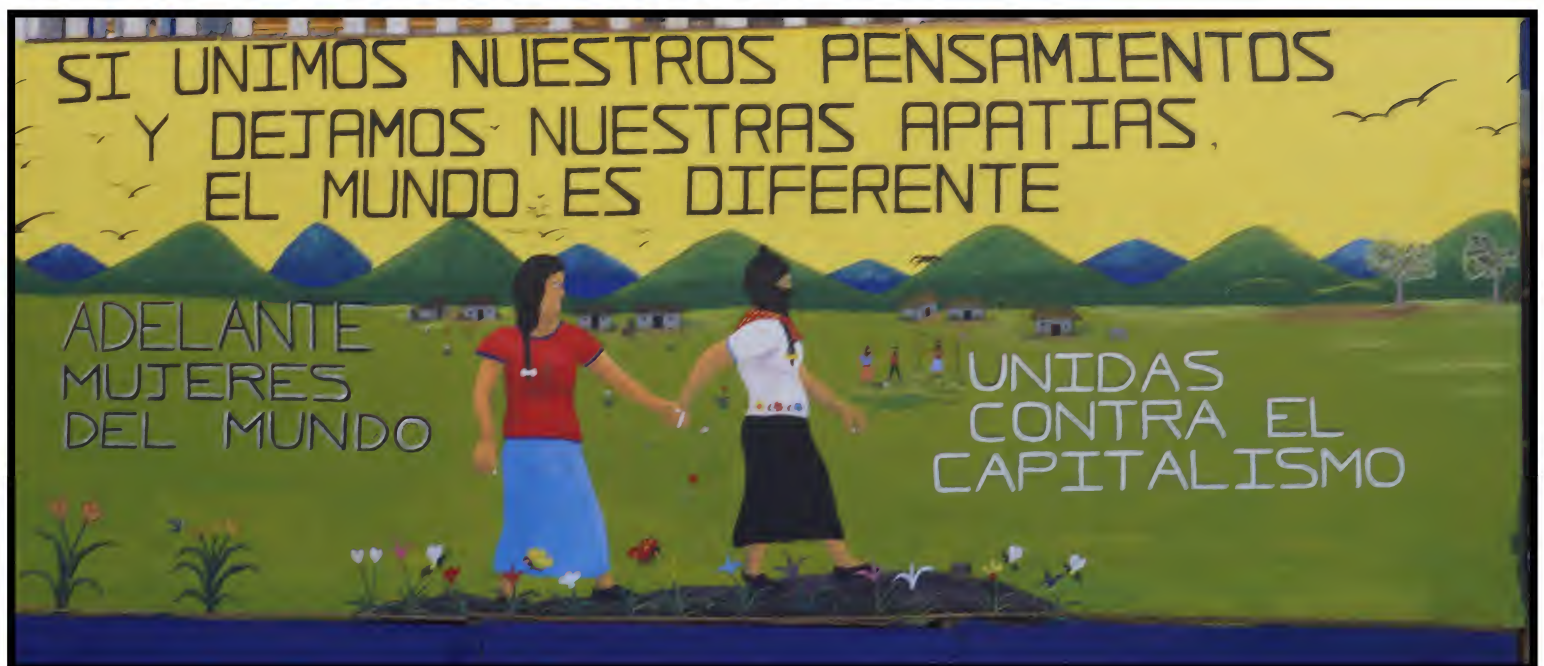
We dont know if it was a white woman who crossed out the "for Indigenous people only" sign on the indigenous lesbianisms circle but we assume.



The Zapatistas themselves have invited a wide variety of people with so-called social and cultural capital such as Whiteness to their communities as a safety strategy for decades now. Their call over and over is to everyone and their critiques and communiques generally don't refer to what the U.S. calls "race" but instead to one's political commitment and conduct.

Unfortunately, even then, the whiteness we witnessed still has a long way to go to move towards a place that centers dignity in their actions and behavior.

Women of Color impacted by this conduct quickly called on their resilience and strength to minimize the fall out of this kind of conduct. There were many POC looks of support, interventions, and interruptions of racist behaviors and Women of Color and Indigenous talking circles processing our experiences and lifting each other up with song and medicine. (which a white woman tried to to again violate even in our last minutes on the land).











# TALLERS, PLATICAS Y MAS: CREATING THE SPACE TO SHARE AND JUST BE WITH ONE ANOTHER

I took on a self-appointed task of listing all of the workshops and different spaces that the Zapatistas hosted during the Mujeres Encuentro. As I was doing this, I realized the enormous undertaking this must have been for our awesome compañeras. I was awe-struck at how they were so humble with this through our entire visit there. I counted up all of the offerings that they had during the three days that they hosted us, and for my final tallies, I came up with the almost unbelievable number of 556 total spaces that they hosted for us! That means, in a span of just three days, they had an average of 185 workshops a day. Wow. That is so amazing, and in many ways, this can explain why it was overwhelming at times (for me at least).

I also noticed that they had done the tremendous and important work of diligently gathering spaces that were similar in topic and scope, and presenting them in the same physical realms or areas. Our compas were obviously very thoughtful and deliberate in where and why they put

certain workshops in certain areas. From offering over a hundred and fifty of the more traditional workshop models, to having mujeres present and offer their knowledge and other beautiful things in more alternative formats such as platicas, narratives and recollections of herstories - it seemed like there was something to offer for every mujer present (and even for those who couldn't be there, amazingly so). There were some spaces that I didn't even realize were what they actually were or what they meant until I returned home and typed it all up. Part of this was due to my not understanding the Spanish translation of some of these words. As I'm sure another part of this was the sheer magnitude and number of workshops that were presented was just too much for me to process in the amount of time I was there.

It also took some time to digest, appreciate, and truly value what this space really meant to me and many of the mujeres that shared this experience with me. As different each individual's perspective was this past March at the Zapatista Encuentro, I think that the collective discourse and consensus to follow this time was one of love, appreciation, and compassion of our fellow compañeras in lucha. We all share the collective experience of knowing all too well, how to struggle and fight for our rights, enjoy the fruits of our labor, or merely be left alone to live life, relax and "be entertained". Often times, we find ourselves fighting back, in response and in reaction to the ugliness and chaos we find ourselves in. The mujeres Encuentro of 2018 showed me - showed us - that it's okay to sit back and have our main goal be to trust in one another and believe all that we have between us is enough. Enough to keep moving, keep living, and to celebrate.

- By La Smiley



# WORKSHOPS / TALLERS: REFLECTIONS

## **Grupo Teatro:**

A girl's group from San Cristobal de las Casas performed a wonderful teatro that consisted of many skits. They utilized props, great humor, confident voices and movement-filled bodies to present their stories.

Their narrative subjects ranged and I can't recall the specific ones. I just remember laughing a lot and thinking that these girls were amazing, smart, beautiful and funny.

## **How to Make a Zine:**

Although I made it late to this workshop, it ended



up being okay. It's funny because I thought I was actually getting to the workshop early, but it was the opposite. As a fellow Corazon pointed out later to

me, we were on Zapatista time, not on the bad-government time. Which is always a better thing.

So I got to the workshop late, but the facilitator, a young mujer, graciously welcomed me in the room (or took pity on me). Either way, next thing I knew, I had a piece of paper in my hand that was passed on to me by a Zapatista



compañera. I colored in a few things with some markers from a nearby table.

I looked around and saw many women of all ages,

of different ethnicities, and with many skin tones, little girls and

many Zapatista mujeres, sitting at tables, on chairs and benches and on the floor throughout the room. They were all working on a page of a zine; either coloring, cutting

things out of a magazine, drawing or writing and other things. It was wonderful. I finished coloring the page I was working on and the facilitator announced that we

*And we experienced how simple it could be to create something to share information and knowledge with whoever we'd like.*

could trade pages with someone else in the room and add or collaborate on the new page that we were handed.

This young, 20's-ish Mexicanx woman with dreads

approached me and we smiled at each other. We exchanged pages and went back to our respective "workspaces", mine being a bench near the wall. I looked at

the side of the page that the young woman created. It was beautiful.

She had taken a few actual plants and herbs, and pasted or affixed them to the page. The page was titled "*Plantas Santas*" and next to each herb, she had



written the name of the plant and what it could be used for, medicinally or healing-wise. Being an acupuncturist and an herbalist myself, I loved this.

I turned the page and started sketching with my pen. I added a few pictures of different areas of a body and then I

titled each section. I added titles like "Headache / *Dolor de Cabeza*", "Menstrual Issues / *Problemas Menstrual*", "Emotions and Stress / *Emociones y Estrés*" and "Physical Pain / *Dolor Fisico*".

With each picture I included three to four points drawn on the "model" and for some, added a location description and a name for the point/s. I think my



sketches turned out pretty cool, and most importantly, they conveyed the information that I wanted them to.

The time came for us to trade our

page back or give it to someone else. I gave it back to the mujer that I had originally gotten it from. She seemed to really appreciate the knowledge on the

page, which we had both equally contributed to. I kinda wanted to keep the page but it felt better

having her take it. We also traded contact information - she lives in D.F. and is part of a women's artist collective there - and I felt like I made a great



too. It features ideas of love, home, warmth, strength and has a bunch of great pictures, one being a cute-ass clit saying “hi”.

She said we could make it a longer process or involve technology, but all that one needed was a creative, knowledgeable mind that wants to share information with anyone. She said it could involve one person or many, like on that day. I really loved these points that the facilitator made at the end.

### **Make Your Own Menstrual Pad:**

The facilitators, two mujeres (both in their mid-late-forties

connection.

I’m grateful that I did not keep that page because I ended up with an AWESOME finished one from an older Zapatista compa. I love it so much I want to share it with you all in this zine too. I think it’s wonderful and I know you will

The facilitator wrapped up the workshop by saying that we all succeeded in making a zine that day. And we experienced how simple it could be to create something to share information and knowledge with whoever we’d like.



from my guesstimate), were sitting on the floor and a circle of women were all around them, on the floor and in chairs and benches. I took a seat near the back on a chair and saw and felt some of the menstrual pad patterns that they had passed around the room. There were other patterns that were scattered too, and everyone was free to trace any of the them and take them home to make

their own menstrual pads. The women discussed different methods of making the pads and different materials that one can use. One woman said that either synthetic or natural fibers can be used for menstrual pad materials. She emphasized that as long as one takes care, washes and

maintains her pad properly, they can last for years.

They also had the diva cup menstrual cup brand and other menstrual cup models from around the world to pass around. One lady described different shapes and said that there is not a lot of variation in quality





with the cups, and I think she said that the shapes come down to personal preference. The same could be expected with average duration from normal use of the cup, if maintenance and care were done properly. She also shared that one

friend of hers had her cup for over twelve years or something vintage like that. She said the average life span is about 5-8 years, if I remember

correctly. I have never tried either a reusable pad or a menstrual cup, and I prefer tampons. But I do know the environmental impacts of tampons

wishing that tampons would have been included in the talk, if there is a reusable type out there (I found out later that they're out there, but they are



not very practical or common). I suppose, of the two options, the cup may be the most similar to

are not the greatest, even if the ones I use do not have an applicator (o.b.). So I'm not closed to trying a DIY pad or a cup one day.

I just found myself

what I use now and the easiest to transition to. Maybe one day.

## **Telling Your Historia:**

Again, I arrived

halfway through. The woman talking in front of everyone was amazing. She was finishing up a story about how dogs became our friends (us humans), I think. Then she talked about her struggles as a *mujer Indigena*: Who is dark. Who is bigger / not skinny. Who is poor. And all of these other things that society does not value.

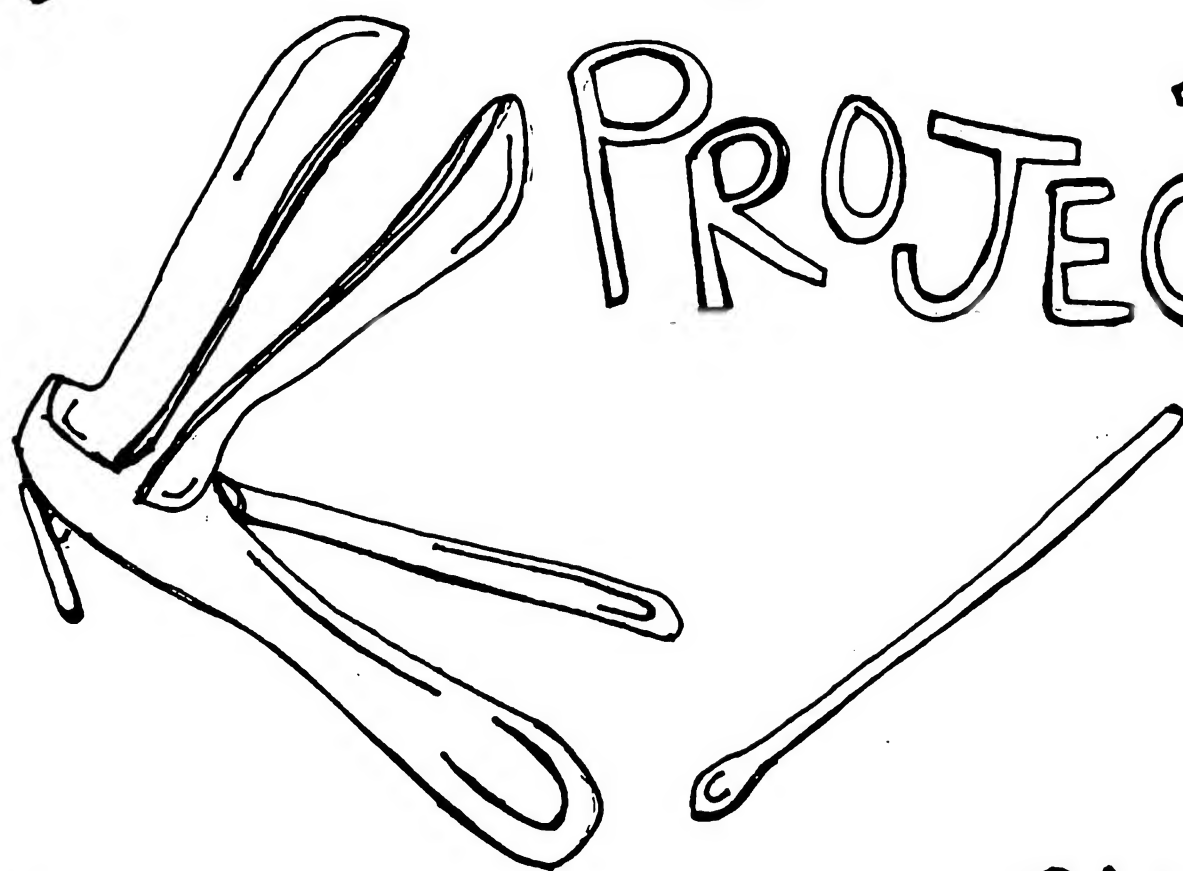
She said it took her a very long time to become proud and unapologetic about who she was. She realized that she had many stories to tell. She loved to

talk and to share with everyone. She said she loved to describe what was going on in *her* mind. In vivid detail. And to help someone else actually see what she's talking about. In *their* mind. She said if she can do this, then she's done her job. I think she did an awesome job, as I remember picturing different things she touched on.

- BY LA SMILEY



# GYNECOLOGY IS A PATRIARCHAL PROJECT.



WESTERN MEDICINE IS BASED  
ON 'MALE' ANATOMY. FIND YOUR  
CERVIX. TOUCH YOURSELF.



# Making life liveable

During one of the sessions I attended, we meditated as a collective and individually about the women who made an impact on our lives, who made life for us livable. The Brazilian facilitators asked us to share as a group, our own pains, pleasures, and things that make life more livable. It was awesome speaking to the women in the group. We were intentionally creating time to reflect on what makes our life liveable. We found ourselves recounting the endless ways women



and other femme folk in our life enable us to continue, to endure, and feel joy against the backdrop of capitalist patriarchy. It was humbling to see some of the young zapatista women in the workshop write the name of Comandanta Ramona y Esther as women who made their life liveable. Partaking in this workshop helped me meditate on the direct links between women in my life and my ability to walk towards a horizon that is based in dignity and liberation. x





"El Zapatismo no seria lo mismo sin sus mujeres rebeldes y nuevas. Las indias tambien hemos levantado nuestra voz y decimos: Nunca mas un Mexico sin nosotras. Nunca mas una rebellion sin nosotras. Nunca mas una vida sin nosotras."

- Comandanta Ramona

# **CAMPESINAS, LAND DEFENSE, & EXTRACTIVISM**

Amongst all the powerful workshops at the encuentro, I was able to sit in a workshop about campesinas, land defenders and extractivism. The workshop was packed to the brim. Many, like myself, wanted to learn more about the ways the State and corporate interest work together to exploit natural resources through extractive practices. We especially wanted to hear directly from the indigenous women who are, consequently, the front-line defenders against hydroelectric dam projects, major mountain-mining, etc. The notes here are some of the knowledge that was shared:

It's important to reflect on how we think about the land and how we relate to the land. How do we relate with "creation"? We need to look at land for wisdom, it's not about asking who created the land. The land is creation. The state categorizes land defenders as terrorist because of their ways of being. La criminalización más fuerte es contra la defensoras del territorio.

Extractivist projects impact women differently. The government has strategies that normalize the violence of extractivism. Displacement is a key part of extractivism. Territory is more than space, it's spiritual, emotional, etc. **X**

# AXOLOTL Y LA ISLA DE LAS MUÑECAS

## *by la smiley*

On one of the days that the Corazones were in Mexico City, we decided to go to Xochimilco. Existing for a millennia, Xochimilco is made up of floating islands surrounded by water-filled canals and passageways.

We all huddled near the entrance of the canals and discussed what tour we wanted to take. There was someone in the group who suggested we go to La Isla De Las Muñecas. I was fine with this. Although I had never heard of it, and it sounded scary and like it would give me nightmares, I looked forward to going to it nonetheless.

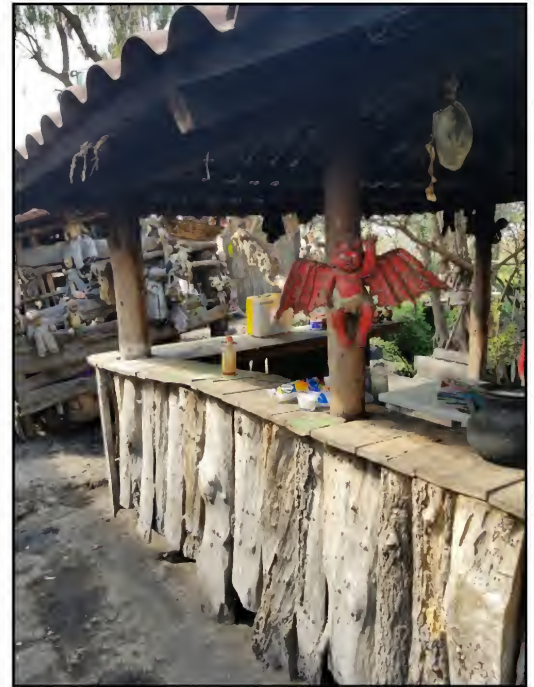
The part of Xochimilco that I really came to see was an Axolotl (Ah-hoh-lote-l) sanctuary. It turns out there were a few sanctuaries on site but only one was open that day. So we headed to that one.

La Isla de las Muñecas was more sad and creepy than scary and creepy. The history involved a little girl who drowned near the entrance to a man's home on the Isla. After the little girl drowned, the man became forever "haunted" or obsessed with saving this little girl's soul. So obsessed that he turned his home and



island into a living & breathing plastic, glass and fiber tribute to this little girl's soul.

He started his tribute by hanging one doll on a tree. This doll was said to have floated up to the man's island, to the same place where the little girl died. It's also said that this original doll was most likely once the little girl's. And from that one doll grew many more. Now hundreds, if not thousands, of dolls are displayed in places all over the island. A nephew of the man who once lived there follows the tradition of sharing the place with strangers, neighbors and tourists. He continues to tell the man's, the little girl's, and the doll's stories.



The nephew also shared with us that his uncle believed - and passed on this belief to him - that they did manage to accomplish the goal of saving the girl's soul. They also believed that now the girl's spirit, along with others, does a good job at protecting them and their home. So it seemed like they don't view their island or the story as scary or creepy, as many people (including myself) often do. After visiting la Isla, we made it to the Axolotl sanctuary. Axolotls are salamander-type creatures that are





native to the waters of Xochimilcho. They are adorable and have some really magical qualities and features, but they are also critically endangered and we are not fucking doing enough to save them. There was a mujer that worked at the sanctuary that showed us the three (3!) total axolotls that they have in their possession. I couldn't help but ask if I could touch them and the woman said okay. They felt rubbery and wet, like other salamanders I've felt before.

Someone in the group asked the caretaker if the axolotls feel pain. She told us that she imagined that they did, given that they flinch when one comes near them to merely *touch* them. There were two darker brown-black ones and one that was light pink. I learned later that axolotls



come in all sorts of shades, and that the lighter one may have been an albino or a leucistic axolotl. Leucistic means that its genes don't allow its color / pigmentation to express itself. They are different from albino axolotls in that they usually do have darker or black eyes and some spots or patches of pigmentation or roughness in their skin.

The caretaker also told us that there were no more (zero!) growing naturally there. The last one found in the waters was back in 2014. Xochimilco had been their original habitat and home for thousands of years, since the times when the ancient

Aztec Empire thrived there. She also told us that there were many axolotls around the world, in laboratories, universities, and private breeders' and individuals' aquariums and tanks. They were being studied by many scientists for health purposes because of their potential in anti-cancer research, as well as for their unique regenerative capabilities.

The following is a quote from professor Stephane Roy of the University of Montreal:

*"You can cut the spinal cord, crush it, remove a segment, and it will regenerate. You can cut the limbs at any level - the wrist, the elbow, the upper arm - and it will regenerate, and it's perfect. There is nothing missing, there's no scarring on the skin at the site of amputation, every tissue is replaced. They can regenerate the same limb 50, 60, 100 times. Every time: perfect."*



WHAT THE FUCK. Some people, some scientists especially, think that they are gods. Yes, "You can cut, crush" ....etc. and do all this to them. But *should* you do this? Just because you can?

How must these axolotls look up at Ms. Roy when she's doing all of this to them? Whether she's splicing, cutting, crushing, removing, squeezing, or doing whatever other butcher-isms to them, they are still being hurt. If they have any sort of semblance of a consciousness, I can't help but wonder if they



wonder why she is doing this to them, as they feel the inevitable pain.

*As she slices. Cuts. Removes. Crushes. Smiles down at them. Don't worry. It'll regrow. We're doing this for science. For the betterment of our health. To help people. Cancer will be cured.*

Of course, we didn't know about this specific scientist as we discussed this aspect of the research on axolotls and their "unique capabilities" on our ride back from the sanctuary. Some of us were lost in deep thought and some of us openly, loudly and passionately discussed the fate of these little animals. This conversation and the realization that their future was more dire than I once thought, in addition to my original interest in them, spurred me to write this piece on these amazing mujeres (I refuse to use "guys" as a generic pronoun, so no, axolotls are not all females).



I also noticed on the ride back that throughout Xochimilco were various tributes to Axolotls, in the form of paintings, murals, statues, names of boats or islands or other places. The word "axolotl" is Nahuatl, which is the original, ancient Aztec language. The conventional agreement is that "axolotl" is comprised of two Nahuatl words, one that means "water" and another that means "dog".







There is an old tale of how the axolotl came to be. The “Xolotl”, of its namesake, was an Aztec mythic dog-headed deity or god. Her thing would be to take the souls of the dead to their resting place for all of eternity. Anyways, she did this for others with no

problem for awhile - who knows for how long - but she knew that she didn’t want this for her own fate. That was for damned sure. So to try to escape this ending, she “transformed” herself into an axolotl.

But the joke was on her. Because thanks to a kink in evolutionary biology, she didn’t realize that being an axolotl, she would perpetually be in a state of neoteny. This means that she would be stuck in the water and not be able to get onto land ever really (unlike most salamanders). Part of the reason for this is that neoteny ensures that an animal will not complete the full maturation process, yet it is still able to reproduce. So axolotls retain their gills and do not undergo full metamorphosis, unless it’s induced unnaturally. They are an enigma in this way.

As I mentioned before, many axolotls can be found in laboratories worldwide. The other places that they are commonly found in are public and private aquariums. This is another discussion we had.

At least two of the mujeres in the collective had a personal





memory and anecdote of seeing one or more axolotls in the home of a(n) (inevitable white) person in Humboldt County in our college days. We all digested that information with many emotions and thoughts coursing through our bodies.

So many wonderful things and opportunities could come from these magical beings. They can “offer” us so much.

*But when is enough, enough? When is taking from other beings in this world too much? What do we give back to them? Even under the guise of using the knowledge obtained for healing purposes?*

Just because an animal or creature has this potential does not mean that we should take it away, strip it, and suck it dry of everything it's offering to us. It's probably *not* even offering these things to us. This is the ego of humanity.

Because to want more and more and to be forever un-satiated is to be truly human in this capitalist, white supremacist, trans-phobic and patriarchal world. Unless we demand changes and refuse to let this continue. A new paradigm for a new world must be established.





**BERTA VOLVERÁ  
Y SERÁ MILLONES**  
#VivasNosQueremos



In line with the Zapatista's call to remember the compas who could not physically attend the encuentro, we dedicate this zine to a woman that made our lives more livable by filling it with rebellious joy and revolutionary love.



CANDICE TAMIKA RICE

MAY 6, 1976 - JANUARY 2, 2014

Candice was a visionary woman of color warrior from South Los Angeles, with roots in Trinidad and Tobago who lived her life in constant struggle. Whether it was combating the institutional anti-blackness that plagued her entire life, or calling out the rampant misogyny found within leftist circles, nobody talked shit/spoke truth like Candice Rice. With the sharpest-wittiest-critical analysis of the current social and political crisis, Candice brought a sense of both levity and legitimacy to any organizing space that she participated in. She supported her family on a working class salary and stayed looking fresh and fabulous while hustling for her PhD in Ethnic Studies, where she was researching the self-organization of low-income Black mothers during the 1992 LA Uprising.



Candice approached this liberation work with fierceness and love, tirelessly working to uncover and uplift the stories of other economically exploited women of color in her community. She also generously provided an immeasurable amount of support to students of color struggling to find their voice within academia and to young women of color specifically, as we continuously looked to her for guidance on dealing with the losers who were fucking us over both personally and politically. As one of the founders of the Women of Color Liberation Army and the Black (W)Hole Collective, Candice instilled within us the following ethos: ain't nobody gonna save us but ourselves--self-determination is the only option.

We truly believe that Candice was the original inspiration for the I don't give a fuck! lifestyle, adding a splash of white tears to her morning cup of coffee on her way to fucking shit up at the bougie white university where she worked and studied.

WRITER. VISIONARY. MOTHER. WIFE. ACTIVIST. SCHOLAR. EDUCATOR. AMIGA.  
COMPAÑERA.

Your absence elicits both feelings of boundless gratitude for the blessing of having known you and absolute bitterness that we don't get the chance to see you grow into the ass-kicking elder that we know you would have continued to mature into.

WE REMEMBER YOU WITH LOVE AND RAGE, SISTER.

CANDICE TAMIKA RICE PRESENTE!





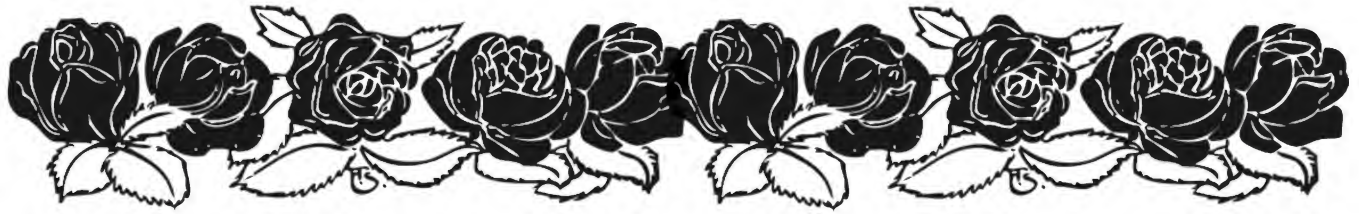


#REXISTEMX 2014





# Las Que Faltan

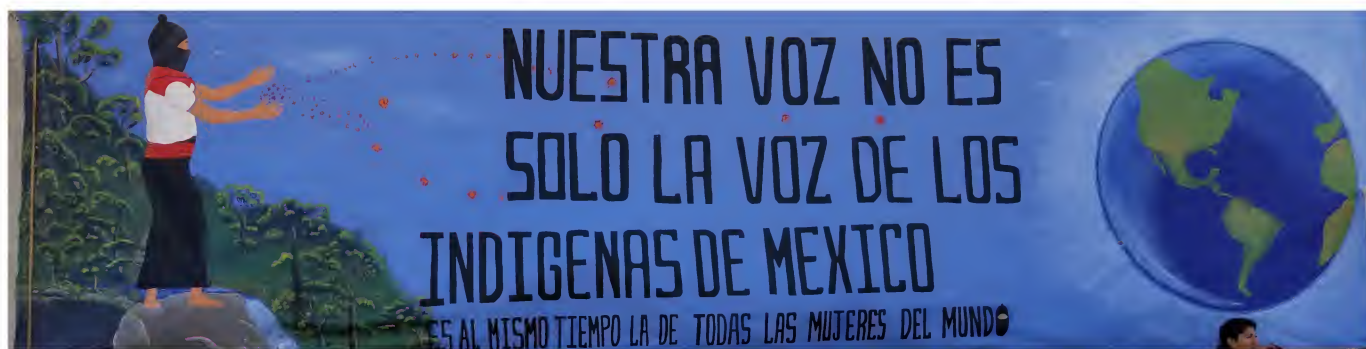


No están solas y ni una menos!

Remembering *las compañeras que faltan* was central to the encuentro. During one of the evenings after the workshops, the zapatistas asked us to think about all the *compañeras* who were not present: those who could not make it and those who are no longer with us. They asked us think about the reason why these compas did not make it. They held candle lights to share a message of solidarity with all the other *compañeras* of the world. They recognized that women could not attend because of financial circumstance, are incarcerated, or were taken by violence. Finally, we were left with a message to live, and struggle against the forces that undermine our ability to live with dignity.

Las que faltan were there with us in heart and rebel-spirit.





**Words of the Zapatista women at the closing ceremony of the First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle in the Zapatista Caracol of the Tzotz Choj Zone**

**March 10, 2018**

Good evening, good morning, good afternoon, compañeras and sisters in struggle, wherever you may be. Sisters and compañeras who have accompanied us in this First International Gathering of Women in Struggle: We are going to say a few words on behalf of all of us, the Zapatista women of the five caracoles.

We would like to thank the compañeras from the city who worked as part of the support teams: we know very well how fucking hard they worked to handle the emails, registration, organization of transportation, and the scheduling of times and locations for all the activities.

We would also like to send our regards to our Zapatista compañeras who could not come to this gathering, and who stayed behind attending to other tasks so that we could be here.

Similarly, we would like to thank our compañeros who had to stay behind to take care of our families, animals, homes, barracks, and fields, and who were on alert in case the bad governments committed any malicious acts against this gathering.

But our final words are especially for you, sisters and compañeras, women in struggle.

Women in struggle on the five continents of the world, we humbly and sincerely thank you, with all our hearts and with resistance and rebellion, for your participation. This goes for those of you who are here as well as those who are following closely what happened here.

Thank you for your ears, your eyes, your words, your workshops, your presentations, your art, your videos, your music, your poetry, your stories, your plays, your dances, your paintings, your weird things which we had no idea what they were, and all you brought to us so that we could know and understand your struggles.

We take this as a very valuable gift that we are going to care for and make grow even larger because we are going to take it to our communities and towns so that more Zapatista women can share in the gift you gave us.

We receive this gift with respect and affection because all of you made a huge effort to travel here from your places of struggle, from your times and customs, from your worlds, to be at this gathering, which we still don't know if turned out well or not.

We've already looked at some of the comments that were deposited in the Criticisms Box. We still have to read everything and analyze it all among ourselves. In that box, we found a letter whose message we think applies to all of us. A compañera is going to read it.

(A compañera reads the letter: it is from the family members of the disappeared students of Ayotzinapa, asking that they not be abandoned and left alone in their struggle, because the bad government wants to close their case and let it fade into oblivion.)

We haven't looked at all the comments, but we assure you of our commitment to fix what you've pointed out as wrong and to improve what you've said wasn't done properly.

We can say clearly, though, that so far the great majority are criticisms of errors and mistakes that we



have in our organization.

We are going to take all your critiques into account to improve next time, if there is a next time. All those criticisms, along with our word that we shared over these past few days, will be published on the Enlace Zapatista webpage so that all of you can see them.

But regardless, we want to know what you all think in general.

So we ask you, compañeras and sisters:

Did the gathering turn out mostly all right?

Or did it turn out badly?

Well, regardless of whether you respond that it turned out well or badly, we're going to tell you something in all sincerity, something that we ask you to keep just among ourselves here, as women and women in struggle. So don't go around talking about it, especially with men.

The truth is, sisters and compañeras, we suffered a lot because we didn't know how we were going to pull this off.

This was our first time organizing an event like this, alone, just the women.

And we organized it from below, that is, first we had meetings and discussions in our collectives in the communities and towns, then in our regions, then in the zones, and finally among the five zones together.

And if we women take a long time to come to a small agreement, well you can imagine what it's like when it's a big agreement such as the decision to host this gathering.

It took us months to arrive at an agreement among all of us. Because the thing is, if we're going to do something we have to do it among all of us, collectively.

And there's no guidebook or manual for how to do that.

Nor could we ask the male compañeros because they don't know how to do it either because, as we said, nothing like this had been held before.

So among ourselves, we had to figure out how to do it.

We were thinking about it the whole damned day and all the damned night. We could barely eat. And we could hardly sleep.

We were worried about whether it was going to turn out well or turn out badly.

We were worried as Zapatistas yes, but we were also worried as women.

Because we invited you, so it was on us whether it turned out well or badly.

We had to think about where you would sleep, where you would eat, where you would bathe, where you would go to the bathroom, the sound, the lights, the water, what we would do if you got sick, what we were going to say to you, how we would talk to you, and how we would listen to and see you.

So, we apologize with all our heart for the errors and mistakes we made in carrying all this out. To be sure, next time, if there is a next time, the things you critiqued won't turn out as badly.



Because we think the most important thing, first and foremost, is that you feel at ease here, that you feel comfortable.

But it's also important that we see and listen to each of you, because you made a long fucking trip to come all the way out here and it is only right for us to listen to and see all of you, whether or not we agree with what you say.

There was no way one collective was going to be able to organize all that. That's why more than two thousand Zapatista women from the five caracoles were here.

And maybe that wasn't even enough, because there are about five thousand of you, though some say eight thousand and others say nine thousand.

We can only guess exactly how many women in struggle were here over the past few days, but we think we can all agree that there were a shitload of us.

And we didn't think so many would come, because this place is very and there are few comforts here.

If we had known there would be so many of you, perhaps more Zapatista women would have come so as to be able to embrace each and every one of you and say to you personally what we say to you now collectively.

Six Zapatista women would have come for each one of you: a "pipsqueak" (that's what we call babies who've just been born), a little girl, a teenager, an adult, an elderly woman, and a deceased woman.

All women, all indigenous, all poor, all Zapatistas, all embracing you because it's the only gift we can give you in return.

But in any case, sister and compañera, understand that what we're telling you here is being whispered in your ear, in your language, in your way, in your time, by a Zapatista woman as she embraces you:

"Don't give up, don't sell out, don't give in."

And it is with these words that we say, "Thank you sister. Thank you compañera."

Sisters and compañeras:

On that March 8, at the end of our contribution, each of us lit a small flame.

We lit this flame with a candle so it would last, because a match goes out too quickly and a lighter could easily break.

That small light is for you. Take it, sister, compañera. When you feel alone. When you are afraid. When you feel that the struggle is very hard; when life itself is very hard. Light it anew in your heart, in your thoughts, in your gut.

And don't just keep it to yourself, compañera, sister.

Take it to disappeared women.  
Take it to murdered women.  
Take it to incarcerated women.  
Take it to women who have been raped.  
Take it to women who have been beaten.  
Take it to women who have been assaulted.  
Take it to women who have been subjected to all kinds of violence.  
Take it to women migrants.  
Take it to exploited women.  
Take it to deceased women.



Take it and tell each and every one of them that she is not alone and that you are going to struggle for her; that you are going to struggle for the truth and justice that her pain deserves; that you are going to struggle so that the pain she carries will not be repeated in another woman from any world.



Take it and turn it into rage, courage, and determination.  
Take it and join it with other lights.

Take it and, perhaps, you will come to think that there can be neither justice, truth, nor freedom in the patriarchal capitalist system.

Then, perhaps, we can meet again to set fire to the system.

And perhaps you will be beside us ensuring that no one puts out that fire until only ashes are left.

And then, sister and compañera, on that day that will be night, perhaps we will be able to say together with you:

“All right, yes, now we are really going to begin building the world we need and deserve.”

And then perhaps we will understand that the really fucking hard work will have begun, and that right now we are only practicing, or training, so that we will know what is really most important and what is most needed in society.

And what is needed is for no woman ever again—whatever her world, her color, her size, her age, her language, or her culture—to be afraid.

Because here we know that when we shout “Enough!”, it’s only the beginning of a long road, and that what is missing is yet to come.

Sisters and compañeras:

Here, in front of all of us here present and those who are not here but who are present in their hearts and minds, we propose an agreement to stay alive and continue struggling, each of us according to our ways, our times and our worlds.

Do you accept our proposal?

Well, as we’re writing this document we don’t know whether you’ll respond yes or no, but I’ll continue to our second proposal:

As we have already seen, not all of you are against the patriarchal capitalist system. We respect this and so we propose that we study it and discuss it in our collectives whether it’s true that the system imposed on us from above is responsible for our suffering.

If it turns out to be true, well then, sisters and compañeras, there will be another day to agree to all struggle against the capitalist patriarchy and any patriarchy whatsoever.

And we state clearly “any patriarchy”, regardless of whatever ideas are behind it or its color or its flag, because we think that there is no good or bad patriarchy, but rather that they are the same thing against us as women.

If it turns out not to be true, well, regardless we’ll be seeing each other in the struggle for all women’s lives and for their freedom, and each one of us, according to her thoughts and her perspective, can build her world as she sees fit.

Do you agree, in your worlds and according to your ways and times, to study, analyze, discuss, and, if possible, agree to name who is or who are those responsible for our suffering?

Well, we still don’t know at the time of this writing whether the agreement has been made or not, but we’ll continue to the next proposal:

We propose an agreement to get together again in a second gathering next year, not just here in Zapatista territory, but also in each of your worlds, according to your times and means.

That is, for each person to organize gatherings for women in struggle or whatever they want to call them.

Do you agree?





We still don't know what you will have responded, but either way you will be welcome here, sisters and compañeras.

But we must ask you to please let us know ahead of time, because it's really rough when you tell us 500 of you are coming and you must have lost a "zero" along the way because 5,000 or more show up.

And hopefully when you come back you'll be able to say that in your worlds you met, discussed, and agreed upon whatever agreements you came to.

That is, that your hearts, minds and struggles will have grown.

But regardless you will always be welcome here, women in struggle.

Thank you for listening.

We will now have the formal closing.

Comandanta Miriam has the floor:

Good evening compañeras and sisters.

Thank you compañeras, thank you sisters from the countries of the world and from Mexico who made the effort to arrive here to this little corner of the world.

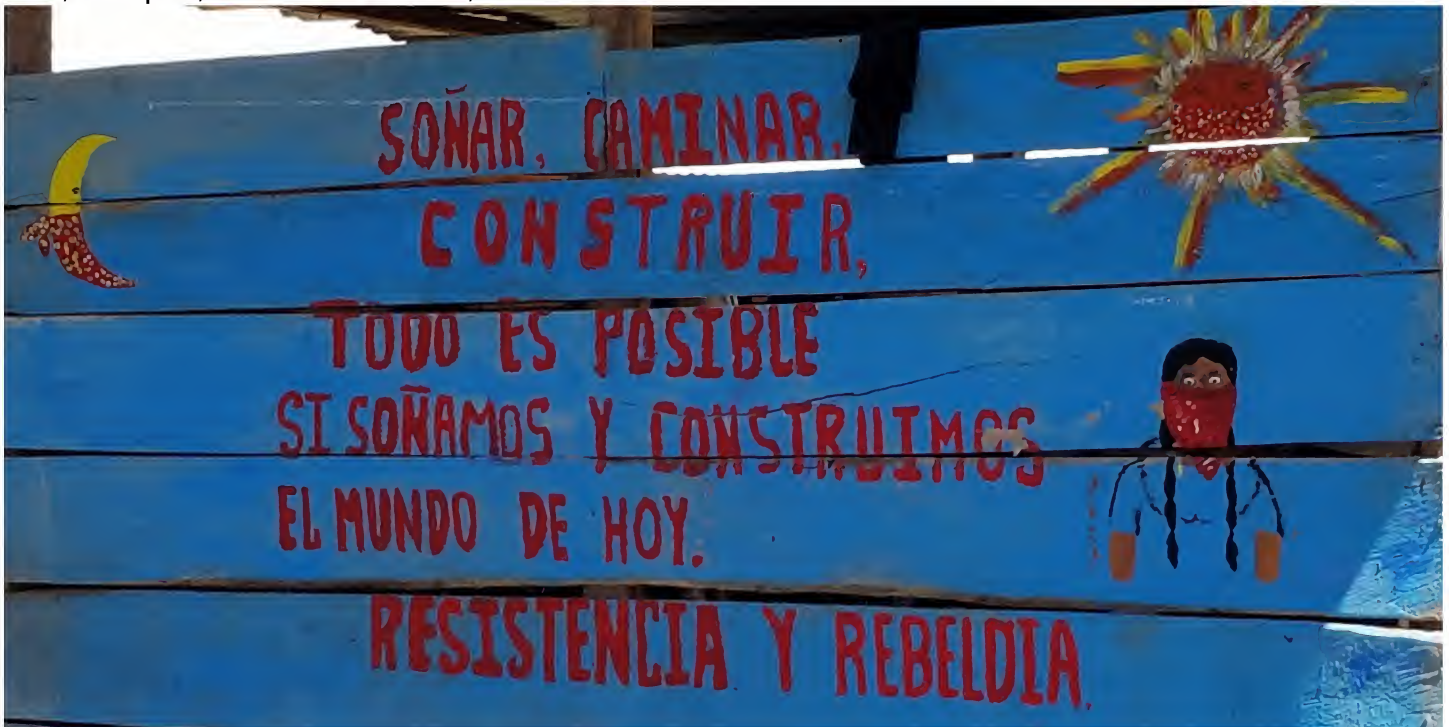
We have arrived at the end of our First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle.

The time is 8:36pm, Zapatista time, and I declare our first gathering "closed".

Take care and safe travels.

From Caracol #4, Whirlwind of Our Words.

Morelia, Chiapas, Mexico. March 10, 2018.



**DREAM, WALK, BUILD, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE IF WE DREAM  
AND BUILD THE WORLD OF TODAY.  
RESISTANCE AND REBELLION**



KEEP  
STRUGGLING.

DONT GIVE  
UP.

DONT SELL  
OUT.



"WE MADE AN AGREEMENT, AND THAT  
AGREEMENT WAS TO LIVE.  
AND SINCE, FOR US, LIVING  
IS FIGHTING, WE AGREED  
TO FIGHT, EACH OF US ACCORDING  
TO OUR MEANS, OUR PLACE  
AND OUR TIME."